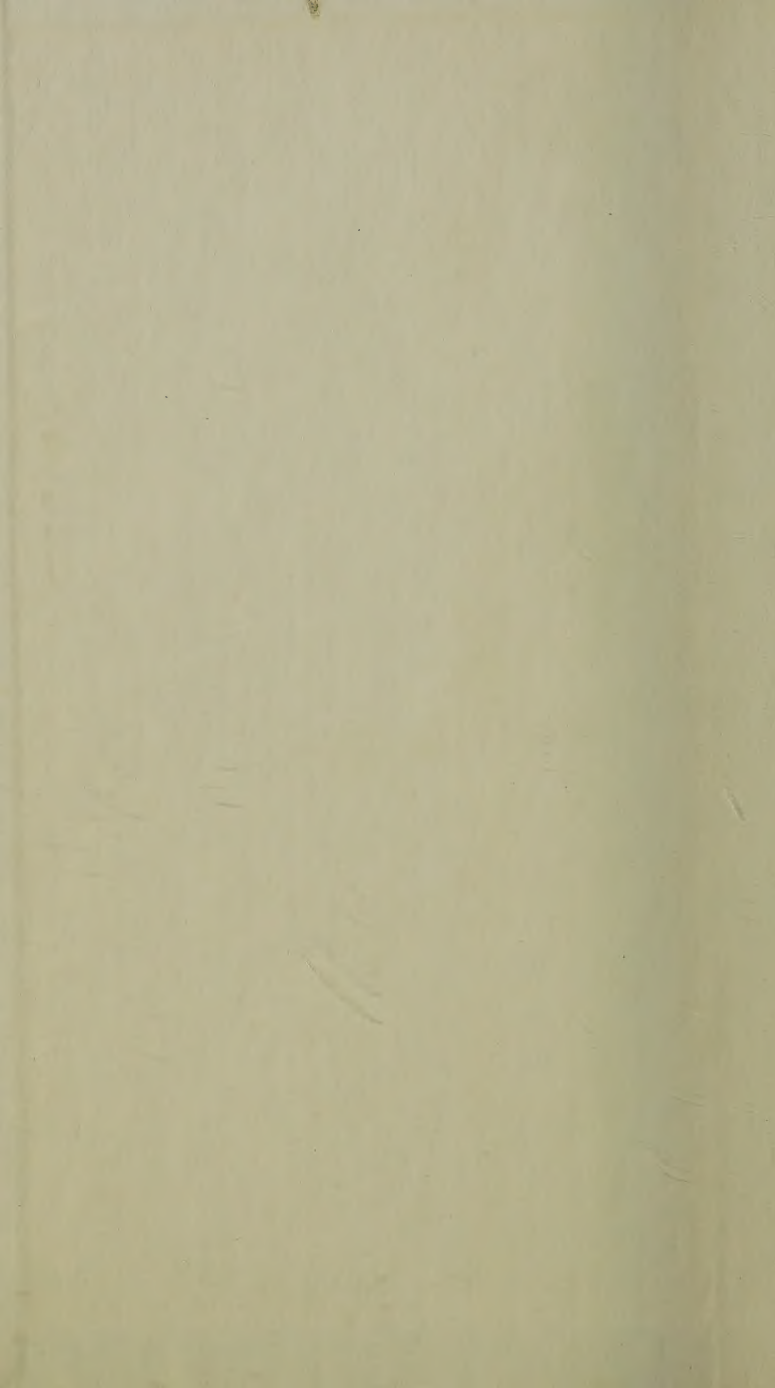


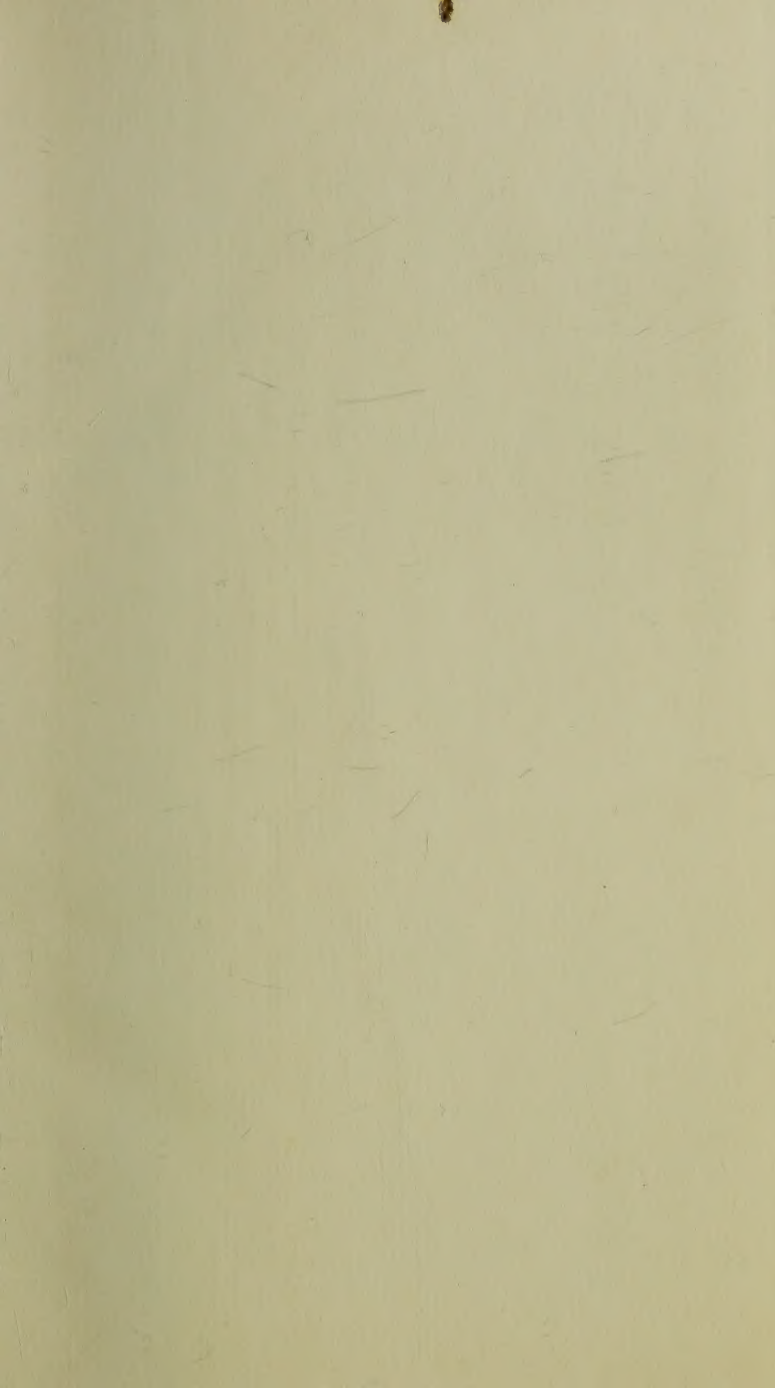
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*Mikhail Shatrov*

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DRAMAS  
of the  
REVOLUTION











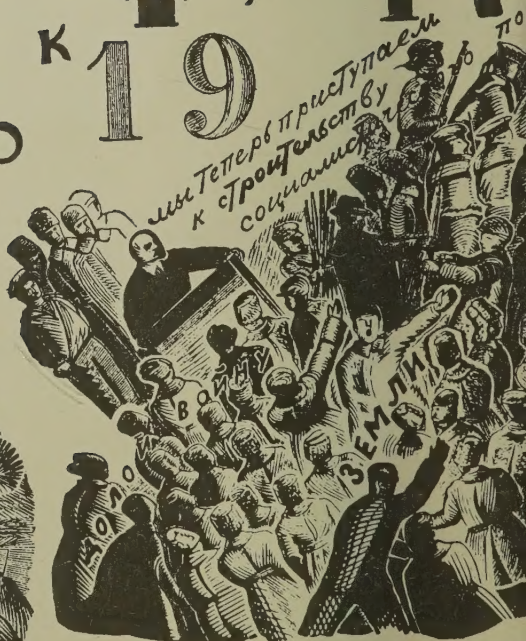
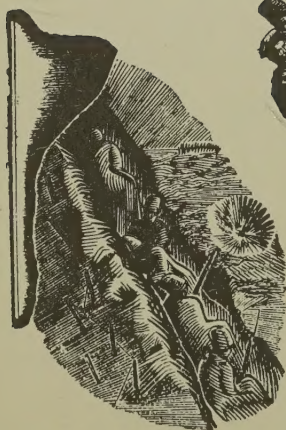
# Mikhail Shatrov

# DRAMAS

# of the



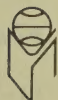
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# REVOLUTION



1928 EW  
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PROGRESS PUBLISHERS  
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Translated from the Russian by *Cynthia Carlile* and *Sharon McKee*

Designed by *Fyodor Denisov*

**Михаил Шатров**

**ДРАМЫ РЕВОЛЮЦИИ**

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## HISTORY IS A FACTUAL DRAMA

*Nature cannot abide a void. While Soviet historical thought dozed and scholars with degrees used ruler and compass to measure what modest statements they could make about events of the distant and not so distant past, literature took on an educating mission and rushed to build bridges between history and the present. Drama, particularly the political theatre of Mikhail Shatrov, was in the forefront. The bans placed on his plays *Bolsheviks* and *The 6th of July* would fill volumes. *Blue Horses on Red Grass* and *Thus Shall We Conquer!* showed that political theatre can depict "the colours of the times". The revolutionary polemicism of *Dictatorship of Conscience* at the Lenin Komsomol Theatre gave some officials who feel protective towards history a bad fright. Sturua's<sup>1</sup> staging of *The Brest Peace* at the Vakhtangov Theatre simply shocked some theatre critics. What was it that got under their skin? Perhaps the audacious interpretation of one of the most dramatic pages in our revolution, a few desperate moments when the young republic stood on the brink?*

*Literature cannot take the place of history. But it has a responsibility to history. Hence the polemicism of political theatre.*

*Today's dialogue with Mikhail Shatrov is conducted by journalists Natalya Dardykina and Pyotr Spivak.*

*N. D.: Let's take a long view first. The renowned military leader of Carthage, Hannibal, had one eye. Artists who wished to flatter him gave him two. He ridiculed them, but generously rewarded the artist who depicted him in profile.*

*Human weakness and cunning haven't changed much since then. When you read some of our historians, their grievances obviously stem from the old longing for the profile view.*

*The truth is like a woman for them: they'd like to see her dressed up or at least not have her differ from their conception of her. They think only the truth can't be put on trial. But isn't learning an unending effort to come closer to the truth?*

M. S.: For me, the proper attitude to the truth is expressed in these words Lenin spoke: "The truth should not depend on whom it is to serve." Basically I try to adhere to that. The entire history of the Party and the Revolution provides such a fantastic spiritual, political and moral guide to life that if we were able to fully reconstruct it, with all the ebbs and flows, whirlpools and shoals of the historical process, nothing to my mind could be more interesting. For a long time, the lifespan of several generations, we've been able to observe how those who had a professional duty to come to an understanding of history, study it and pass on what they had learned to the next generation, consciously pursued its distortion. Whole theories were created in the process. For example, that there is factual truth and historical truth. Or the so-called hierarchy of facts theory. Since there's a hierarchy of facts, we can declare one set primary today and the other secondary. And then things start really getting mixed up. Within our memory historians fought the "fallacious" theory of Mikhail Pokrovsky, a major historian who said, "History is politics projected on the past". They fought his theory, and in practice that was all they did. We'll leave *A Short History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*<sup>2</sup> aside. A great deal has already been written and said about it. Let's consider our day.

Which history of the Soviet World War II effort is veracious? The one where the sole guiding force that assured victory was the genius of the Generalissimo? Or the talent of a member of the Military Council named Khrushchev? Or perhaps the "imperceptible but splendid feat of heroism" Brezhnev performed at Malaya Zemlya?

We witnessed all that. And every time the theoretical grounds were found to show why that and nothing else had to be supposed.

The difficulty was that when the party announced, "We don't need that any more. We don't need the kind of party history that makes millions of students and young people grit their teeth, the kind of party history that forces students to crib and copy, instead of reading and learning", we found ourselves witnessing a situation where faces long



familiar frequently presented themselves as the champions of perestroika in the teaching of the social sciences. Everyone wants to bring about perestroika. But how different everyone's understanding of perestroika is. That's at the root of the enormous difficulty our young historians have. And not just the young ones. For me horizontal lines of differentiation have never existed in our society. They have always been vertical. The differentiation has been between those who let their conscience be their guide even in the hardest of times and those who lived by the principle, "How can I be of service to you?"

*N. D.: But there are people who only recall the bits of history they want to recall. What should be done in this instance?*

*M. S.:* When we speak of the approach to history, the basic principle for me, personally, is the principle that there exists a historical truth which is made up of factual truths. And we mustn't hide from a single fact. The most important thing is that we don't have to hide at all. If we've mastered the Marxist-Leninist method, every fact has its place in history, for it existed. You have to understand, analyse and see the links. It's an enormous job that can only be done collectively: historians do their part, artists go into the areas that historians can't — psychology, etc. All of us, together, serve a common cause: the development of a communist worldview.

*P. S.: You first appeared on the scene as a playwright in the mid-50s, at the time of the 20th Party Congress. Please tell us how you came to get involved in the theatre. As far as I know, you did not receive your training in literature. Beyond the times, there were probably some biographical motivations that increased your interest in the conflicts of the revolutionary years and the history of Soviet society?*

*M. S.:* My family experienced all the "delights" of the tragedy that struck our people and the Party. I come from a family of professional revolutionaries. My father's whole family was actively involved in the Revolution, particularly his elder sister, Nina. She worked with Lenin as his liaison before the Revolution. He introduced her to her future husband, Alexei Rykov. In '37 I was too young — just five years old. All my formative years, all my school years, were linked, on the one hand, with that tragedy and on the other, with the atmosphere at home. My first books were the minutes of congresses, which remained in our home after my

father's arrest. He was arrested in '37 and shot. In '49 my mother was arrested. All my other relatives were victims of the Purges, too. The enormous interest I have in Lenin and the Revolution came from my older brother, Semyon. When everyone else was gone he was the one who taught me about life. From childhood on I had tremendous interest in history — I wanted to know everything that had happened. After graduating from secondary school I entered the Mining Institute in Moscow: no other institute would take me with my background. Why Mining? Because the students there got a uniform — a suit and an overcoat (that was an important factor for me) — and were given a stipend even if they got poor grades (I held down a job while I was at the institute so that I could send my mother 30-40 roubles). I tried to express the problems and thoughts about life that consumed my thoughts in drama (I never wrote any poetry) — my love for the theatre pointed me in that direction.

In '55 I wrote my first play that was staged by a professional theatre, *Clean Hands*. I never worked in my official field, though I did graduate from the institute. Instead I became a professional writer. All that time I tried to find the answers there, in history, to thousands of questions that bothered me. But I still didn't have my own voice, just a desire. The first play I wrote where Lenin figured — *In the Name of the Revolution* — was unoriginal in a lot of ways. I blindly followed the path others had blazed and amused myself with a device I was not the first to discover: this didn't happen, but it could have.

The radical change that occurred in our lives after the 20th Party Congress led me to quite a different faith, to my voice as a playwright, to the language of documentary drama, where both words are important: *documentary* is the way of approaching phenomena, *drama* is adherence to the laws of art. When I introduced that genre in this country in 1962 I naturally knew that the device *this didn't happen, but it could have* could only be applied when you didn't know what actually happened. Then the artist could think things up and fill in the holes. But the rest of the time you had to stick to the events. Figure out why out of a million alternatives history chose the one it did and bring out the enormous moral and political lesson that one alternative revealed.

My schooling started at the Communist Party Central Committee's Institute of Marxism-Leninism. Without the

splendid people there I couldn't have taken a single step. But certain individuals there in positions of authority wouldn't even let me take half a step those 30 years. That's also true. In 30 years I wrote just six plays about Lenin and the Revolution. They banned each one. Sent secret reviews to a name very high-up, along with the plays. But it's also true that people rallied around each play, again along vertical lines: the truth was dear to many party officials and ordinary workers.

Whole novels could be written about how each of my things made it to the stage or screen. I lost twice: *The Brest Peace* was shelved for 25 years. The four-part television series *Additions to the Portrait* with Ulyanov in the lead was shelved for 20.

*N. D.: For some historical writers, history is a factual novel. They take pleasure in describing how the great personalities ate, drank, loved, schemed and in between these pleasurable activities ruled their countries. In your work history is a factual drama. Your latest play, Onwards... Onwards... Onwards!, which sparked a heated debate, is perhaps your most accomplished, dramatically. The words, intentions and actions of the characters are considered from the perspective of the present day. Time, the sharpest eye, X-rays each of them in retrospect. It seems to me that your detractors did not notice the artistic device you, the playwright, used: you give snapshots of opponents of the Revolution — Kornilov, Denikin, Lukomsky, Markov. They never know doubt in anything. Lenin is depicted in the play as a HUMAN BEING! He isn't submissive or weak. Like every living, thinking person, Vladimir Ilyich knows arduous moments of doubt. He looks to the future. But it can't be one-dimensional. He is troubled by the Party leaders' attitude towards the people. You really don't have the people on the stage. That makes your detractors unhappy.*

*M. S: Lenin has a marvellous line in Onwards... Onwards... Onwards!: "Even we Bolsheviks are divided in the end by our attitude to the people." What is man — the means or the end? That is the criterion, that's the primary question of this age. What kind of people do they want to see on stage? A nameless people that is silent or runs left and right, like in the film of John Reed's *Ten Days That Shook the World*?*

Of course, you could write a play on the same theme, showing how a political decision affects a single family. But I

deliberately turned my attention to the decision-makers. Part of the idea behind my play was to try and figure out where things went wrong. And they went wrong at the level where decisions were made: auspicious decisions or disastrous, mistaken decisions. Not in the family of the worker or soldier.

In *The Brest Peace* Lenin has a speech in which he talks about the price of mistakes a politician makes — it is human lives. Not wounded pride, not losing a game of chess, but human lives. That play is about the responsibility a leader has to the people. The people are present in the play — they are the audience. The critics didn't understand that an appeal is being made to the audience. They will either be indignant or give Lenin their hearts. I'm sure they'll give him their hearts.

*N. D.: After all, the people aren't present when decisions of national importance are made.*

*M. S.:* In the case of the Brest Peace, the working class and most of the Party were at odds with Lenin. There are the interests of the people, and then there are moods: they may not coincide. What was needed was the genius of Lenin, who understood that and took the responsibility.

*P. S.:* As one scholar has written, "Documentary drama is an act of faith in the audience by art. The audience is presumed to have a mature enough knowledge of history that the playwright does not need to interpret the events he is depicting. The audience is entrusted with that right." But, I think that your plays illustrate well the almost insurmountable difficulty political theatre faces: how can the playwright shake free of convention, avoid reiterating the standard premise he knows before he even picks up his pen?

*M. S.:* Very simple: construct the play according to the laws of art. If my characters start the play not knowing the answer to the questions that are troubling them, and I search for the answer with the characters, encountering problems and contradictions along the way, then the audience, seeing that, starts to trust me, and with the help of my characters I lead my audience to certain conclusions. It's all a matter of trust. And that is only established when the audience senses you're not lying. Unfortunately people here possess an enormous quantity of semi-knowledge, semi-rumours and semi-what-ever, and we can't pretend otherwise. You have to dive right into that hodgepodge of rumours and half-truths and present history as you understand it. People talk about history as



the actions of masses, but any mass is made up of individuals with first and last names. Are the laws of history really so decisive that the will and desires of people have no influence? I didn't think that I would have to deal with an anti-Marxist thesis like that in 1988. The laws of history always work through people; man is the mainspring. But why has that thesis suddenly reemerged? To keep Stalin from being judged by history. If Stalin and everything related to him are the result of a natural historical process, what bone can we have to pick with him? The skill that arguments concerning the objective and subjective factors in history have been presented to us with at various times, depending on what the line was then, simply take your breath away! Failures and crimes are unavoidable difficulties, achievements and successes are the result of the wisdom of those with foresight. Or, to put it another way, cities are surrendered by soldiers but captured by marshals. What we have to learn is to see the interests of certain groups beyond manipulation like this! Here I have to quote Lenin: "People have always been and will always be the silly victims of political deception and self-deception until they learn to look beyond moral, religious, political and social phraseology for the interests of various classes."

*N. D.: That's clear to all of us now.*

*N. S.:* Of course. I would like to make a distinction between criticism and criticism. I've received a huge number of letters. Let's say they're the voice of the people. I've read three or four articles in the press. As a rule, they deliberately ignore the nature of dramatic art, they are full of distortions and lack even the pretense of scholarly analysis — that's why they produce an extremely one-sided impression. And as a participant in the vitally important process occurring today, this is how I feel about it: I bear in mind all criticisms prompted by a desire to have me clarify something to avoid giving anyone occasion for a wild interpretation. For example, some readers want Lenin to be more forceful in *Onwards... Onwards... Onwards!*, so that his distress in one scene doesn't colour others, so that it will be clear that the Revolution was carried out according to a strategical and tactical plan Lenin worked out. Since that does not conflict in the least with what I had in mind, I will gladly make the necessary corrections in the stage version. What's more, when the play is staged a lot of things that can't be predicted today will appear in it — after all, a production is born in collabo-

ration with a troupe and a director. In the instances where an idea wasn't expressed clearly enough and can be misinterpreted, it will be worked on, too. That's what makes it so nice to get letters and meet your audience at talks and conferences. But if it's a matter of deliberate ideological juggling, backing down is out of the question. I will never repudiate a single ideological stand in that play. It champions ideals I hold dear.

*N. D.: Fiction has taught us not to be upset when Molière speaks Bulgakov's words, when Griboyedov and Pushkin are engrossed in the world of Tynianov's thought, when Socrates expresses himself with Radzinsky's words.<sup>3</sup> To say nothing of Shakespeare's historical characters. But your Lenin annoys many people. Did you anticipate that there would be indignant cries of, "You don't have any right to put your own words into Lenin's mouth"?*

*M. S.: Of course. That's the usual train of thought. It's the result of lowbrowism. I wrote about the method I use for developing Lenin's voice in *Thus Shall We Conquer!* when it came out in book form.*

*N. D.: Lenin's line in Onwards... Onwards... Onwards!, "I don't excuse myself from moral responsibility for what's happened", has, to put it mildly, prompted objections from your detractors. But wasn't it quite in keeping for Lenin to feel guilty for things he wasn't personally to blame for? In a note from December 30, 1922 in Volume 45 of Lenin's Works we read, "I guess I have to ask the workers of Russia for forgiveness for failing to interfere energetically and vigorously enough in the notorious question of autonomisation, officially called, I guess, the question on the union of the Soviet socialist republics." Further on he says, "If matters have reached the point where, according to Comrade Dzerzhinsky, Ordzhonikidze used physical force, you can imagine what we've gotten ourselves bogged down in." It was Stalin who insisted on "autonomisation", limiting the rights of national groups. Ordzhonikidze wanted to force Stalin's approach here on Georgia, which led to a dramatic conflict. Why did Lenin have such a strong sense of guilt?*

*M. S.: Of course, that is a very subjective moment in the play, because it concerns what happened later. I've been working on the character of Lenin for thirty years, and I really do love that man immeasurably. My understanding of him as a politician, as a Communist, as a Russian intellectual is such that when I thought about what happened, about*

the events that are our sorrow and our tragedy, I thought about what would have happened if he had seen that. And I came to the conclusion that an individual as courageous and honest as that would have first tried to find out where he was to blame: that's axiomatic. An elderly man, 77 years old, wrote to me and said, "That kind of statement just puts Lenin on a pedestal."

What hurts is the arbitrariness, that he was felled by illness and didn't have a chance to set about forestalling the disaster he saw coming before anybody else. The direct political responsibility of those who didn't listen and dismissed Lenin's behests is something else again, because politics had been replaced by intrigue. I understand the displeasure of those who are brought up short by that spot in *Onwards... Onwards... Onwards!*, but nevertheless I'm absolutely sure that at that moment hundreds of hearts in the audience are filled with pride in Lenin and gratitude to him. It's the moral aspect that's important here. Not one leader can ever excuse himself from responsibility for what happens either in his absence or his presence — that's a Party tradition. Naturally, the extent of responsibility is quite different, but still — and now I'm speaking as a writer — it seems to me he would definitely have felt it — not just for Stalin, but for the intrigues of Zinoviev, Kamenev, etc.

*N. D.: Does a playwright have the right to look at history through Lenin's eyes? It's a natural question and many have asked it of Shatrov the playwright. The people, whose name we so love to flaunt, has exclaimed many times, "If Lenin could only see this!" Unfortunately, they've exclaimed it not just when rockets took off, but when laws were flouted and monstrous outrages were committed.*

*P. S.: But does that kind of ingenuous hopefulness contribute anything to the truth? Does it bring us any nearer to the truth? Remember Tvardovsky's ironic lines: "A sigh is in the offing, Utmost daring will be found: If Lenin could only rise up, And take a look around." <sup>4</sup> After all we're the ones who have to judge. What else is historical judgement, anyway?*

*M. S.: Mikhail Gorbachev and our other leaders use Lenin as their guide all the time. I think that's natural. It was tremendous dissatisfaction with the present that suggested the idea of going back to Lenin.*

*In Onwards... Onwards... Onwards! there's a dialogue between Lenin and Fofanova. Lenin talks about the three*

main tendencies in any revolution: to turn the clock back, to give the facade a new coat of paint and to make a revolutionary break. He concludes by saying, "Giving the facade a new coat of paint is not a revolution!" Now compare that with Mikhail Gorbachev's speech at the February 1988 Plenum, where he talked about what different ideas there often are about perestroika, about the people who "see it as cosmetic repairs, paint for the facade, a 'fix-it' for the existing mechanism that works however badly, whereas who knows what the new one will be like." It's the same thing, and not because I'm giving it a modern interpretation, but because revolutionary situations are always very similar, those three tendencies are always present.

*P. S.: In order to recognise that we have to know history and learn how to think in historical terms...*

*M. S.:* Or the question of why the Central Committee dragged its feet before the October armed uprising. We always knew Zinoviev's and Kamenev's position. Then suddenly my play talked about the fact that Trotsky and Stalin had their own plan for the uprising. What a fuss the historians made: Stalin in league with Trotsky! Now Shatrov's done it! And they began to openly falsify well-known facts and proclaim their lies to the world.

So, was the Central Committee unified on the October 24, 1917 uprising and what is the significance of the different attitudes the Central Committee members had to the pace of the uprising? Let's hear what Stalin had to say. In his speech to the Bolshevik faction of the Second Congress of Soviets on October 24, 1917 he declared, "There are two opinions in the Revolutionary-Military Committee: 1) an immediate uprising, 2) concentrating our forces first. The Central Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party supported the second..." What does "concentrating our forces first" mean? What does "waiting for the Congress of Soviets" mean, when Lenin demanded "an all-out offensive"? According to Lenin, waiting for the Congress was either complete idiocy or betrayal. And if Lenin had not arrived at the Smolny that evening and the machinery of the uprising had not started working at full steam, as all the participants in the Revolution testify, would we have won so easily? Again in 1920 Stalin recalled that there were different positions. Describing the days before the Revolution, he said, "And despite all of Ilyich's demands, *we didn't listen to him* [Shatrov's emphasis] but continued to consoli-



date the Soviets and paved the way for the October 25 Congress of Soviets and the successful uprising." So that's how it was: the Revolution occurred according to Stalin's plan, not Lenin's! And historians today are trying to expunge that whole struggle between different positions, different approaches, the jostling among certain ambitious individuals and conceal it with the stereotype of unanimity that's set our teeth on edge. By doing that they are belittling the feat Lenin performed when he risked his life and left for the Smolny on October 24 so that the Revolution the Bolsheviks said was necessary would happen! Tactical questions — to delay or to act — became decisive that night. There you have a vivid example of the role the subjective factor plays in history! Do my critics know about all that? Of course they do! And much more than that even. So why do they pretend otherwise?

*N. D.: Tynianov said, "Where the documents end, I begin." Where do you begin?*

*M. S.:* With a meticulous study of the historical facts. Unfortunately I have never been given access to a single archives. All I've used are Lenin's works and what was published in this country before 1927 — and a lot was. There are a lot of fine points here that are only important to historians and their indepth research. I rely largely on primary sources. But an artist can penetrate recesses that a historian can't. In writing the scene between Stalin and Ordzhonikidze I was assisted by four conversations I had with Sergo's widow, Zinaida Ordzhonikidze, and conversations I had with Anastas Mikoyan after his retirement. There aren't any witnesses to the quarrel between Ordzhonikidze and Stalin, but Zinaida Ordzhonikidze overheard subsequent heated telephone conversations between them. Or the scene in the first act of *Onwards... Onwards... Onwards!* when Zinoviev and Kamenev are at Stalin's. I don't know what actually happened, but after 1956 Gleb Krzhizhanovsky and Yelena Stasova told me that that method of discussion was employed. Nikita Khrushchev told me the same thing during his retirement. The protest lodged by the USSR Procurator General in the Bukharin-Rykov case states that they fought the investigation for six months, but after meeting with members of the Party leadership they changed tack and started giving evidence...

*N. D.: I managed to see one of the first performances of the Sturua production of The Brest Peace at the Vakhtangov*

*Theatre. Lenin as portrayed by Mikhail Ulyanov is a human being above all. A human being of enormous feeling. With a great sense of responsibility. His gesture of despair left a lump in my throat — he was ready to get down on his knees and beg Trotsky to sign the Brest peace treaty. That scene horrifies those who adhere to the traditional way of thinking. Lenin did not get down on his knees before Trotsky — he was ready to give his life to save the Revolution. That isn't in the play. Was that impulsive act the director's touch?*

M. S.: Yes, the actors and director came up with that *mise-en-scène*. You got the point very well. But in my opinion, the theatre was right to take it out. It would have given some people the wrong impression of the play. We haven't completely overcome the stereotypes that were pounded into our heads for fifty years.

P. S.: *Which productions of your plays have you liked best?*

M. S.: As a rule, I participate in the staging of a production, so I'm certainly not an objective observer. You could say I'm an insider... Not long ago during a performance of *Dictatorship of Conscience* at the Lenin Komsomol Theatre, Oleg Yankovsky asked the audience, "Have you read *Onwards...*? What do you think, should it be staged?" You should have heard the response — the whole audience shouted, "Yes, we've read it! Do it! We need you!"

N. D.: *When you read Lenin you notice how much warmer and friendlier Lenin's relations were with Bukharin and Kamenev than with Stalin. The letters and notes he sent the General Secretary were strictly official. It doesn't even occur to you that their relations might have been warm and friendly.*

M. S.: That's right and they weren't. From what I know of the facts, this is how I see the drama, the tragedy that occurred. Chance unfortunately plays a big role in history, just as law-governed processes do. We'll leave it for the philosophers to decide whether it was by chance or inevitable that Lenin was sidelined in the spring of 1922 for four months and at that same time Stalin's desire for unlimited power blossomed unchecked. It is a fact, whatever. Returning upon his recovery, Lenin discovered that Stalin had "concentrated immense power in his hands". And after clashing with him over the creation of the USSR and the foreign trade monopoly, Lenin formulated highly important advice to the

Party. He wasn't pleased by the situation where immense power was concentrated in the hands of one person. Right away, being the farsighted politician he was, he said that "a number of changes had to be made in our political structure", and all those changes were in the direction of democratisation and getting people more involved in administration. The question of cadres was of no small importance — Lenin saw that two men were jockeying for position, Trotsky and Stalin, and advised the Party against both. Stalin's political crudity and the General Secretaryship were incompatible.

At the same time — the plan Lenin devised for building socialism: how to establish cooperatives and conduct a cultural revolution, how to industrialise and by what means — in short, the NEP and the plan for building socialism. They say that the roots of the tragedy lay in the patriarchal backwardness and the absence of a democratic tradition stretching back over many generations. But Lenin was well aware of all that and designed his whole plan accordingly — to keep them from developing, to curb the appearance of negative factors. He saw the solution in democratisation and the transformation of the Party from one of civil war to one of civil peace.

*P. S.: A question that's asked is "Who was to blame?" but there's another, more profound question — "Why?" What were the reasons for these tragic events in our history?*

*M. S.: Those questions are being pondered by the entire party and nation. Read Gorbachev's speech commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Revolution, read Lenin's works, read the Bukharin documents published in *Kommunist* and *Pravda*, the debate in the magazines. I'm not the final judge of the truth. I think the country "fell out of step" the moment it started to retreat from Lenin... That theory naturally needs to be explained, but space is limited so I'll just say that I would repeat everything I put in *Onwards... Onwards... Onwards!**

*N. D.: The personality of any individual, politicians included, is revealed by his treatment of women. Your play depicts an incident that really happened, when Stalin verbally abused Lenin's wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya. How did he treat women in general?*

*M. S.: I learned of that incident not just from documents but from Margarita Fofanova, who was very close to Nadezhda Krupskaya. Of the stream of obscenities that Stalin hurled at Krupskaya I chose the most printable. How did he*

treat women? I don't know much about that. We know that his wife committed suicide. In any case, Stalin was always crude. That is certainly very important in characterising the man.

*N. D.: We know that Lenin and Stalin did not meet a single time during the last year of Lenin's life. Which of the Central Committee members visited Gorki during that tragic January?*

*M. S.:* Bukharin lived in a little house nearby in Gorki. When he stopped by, Lenin was in the throes of death. He rushed over and wanted to hold him... When all that happened Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev came. Trotsky was in Sukhumi and maintained that he received a telegram telling him not to come back because he would not make it in time for the funeral. I think there was a political motivation for keeping him from coming.

*N. D.: You used Lenin's call as the name of your latest play: Onwards... Onwards... Onwards!. Lenin often quoted Goethe's words "Weiter... weiter... weiter!". Krupskaya told a Congress of Soviets that. Life goes on. What historical topics have you turned to now?*

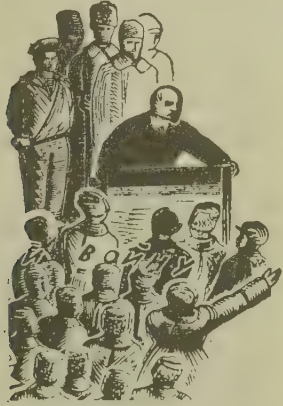
*M. S.:* You know, right now I'm studying very carefully the response to *Onwards... Onwards... Onwards!*. But I'll definitely keep working on this topic. I'm interested in the figure of Stalin and the people around him...

*N. D.: Certain propagandists instilled in us the notion that the Soviet man embodied high ethical and aesthetic standards. Which of our moral losses are particularly embittering and dangerous? Are there any hopeful signs of a growing awareness in society?*

*M. S.:* The worst thing would be to fail to complete the work Chekhov talked about, squeezing the slave out of ourselves. We have to get up off our knees and do away with our fear — someone would really like to see it stay with us forever.

There was a time when the most progressive people in Russia stormed the books of Marx and Engels to gain wisdom. Likewise now we have to storm the works of Lenin, Marx and Engels, analyse, compare... As Goethe said, the only way we can master the legacy our fathers left us is by putting our heads and hearts to work.

# Bolsheviks



DRAMA



## THE CHARACTERS OF THE PLAY

Yakov Mikhailovich SVERDLOV  
Anatoly Vasilyevich LUNACHARSKY  
Vladimir Mikhailovich ZAGORSKY  
Nikolai Nikolayevich KRESTINSKY  
Alexandra Mikhailovna KOLLONTAI  
Grigory Ivanovich PETROVSKY  
Mikhail Nikolayevich POKROVSKY  
Georgy Vasilyevich CHICHERIN  
Viktor Pavlovich NOGIN  
Alexander Dmitriyevich TSYURUPA  
Pyotr Ivanovich STUCHKA  
Avel Safronovich YENUKIDZE  
Alexander Nikolayevich VINOKUROV  
Dmitry Ivanovich KURSKY  
Yuri Mikhailovich STEKLOV  
Nadezhda Konstantinovna KRUPSKAYA, "Nadya"  
Maria Ilyinichna ULYANOVA  
Vladimir Dmitriyevich BONCH-BRUYEVICH  
Anna Petrovna KIZAS  
Vera Mikhailovna VELICHKINA  
MINTS  
WEISSBROT  
OBUKH  
GIL  
BATULIN  
MALE TELEGRAPH OPERATOR  
FEMALE TELEGRAPH OPERATOR  
GIRL

*Bolsheviks* is not a documentary drama, although it is based on documentary sources. In several instances the author has taken the liberty of departing from the true chronology in some minor details (Lenin's telegrams, the uprising in Livni) for the sake of creating a more integral artistic image of the age.

## PART ONE

The Kremlin, Moscow. The Council of People's Commissars conference room is stage left. The anteroom of Lenin's apartment is stage right. A hallway connects the two. The conference room contains three tables arranged in a U and covered with heavy green cloth. Elegant white armchairs with gold molding and red velvet seats are grouped around the tables. They are for the People's Commissars. In the centre there is a simple armchair with a wicker back for the chairman, Lenin. The room also contains two small tables for the secretaries; a telephone is on one. Chairs for guests line the walls. No one is in the conference room. The anteroom of the apartment is furnished with a small table and chairs covered with dust clothes. It, too, is empty. In the hallway a *telegraph operator* is seated at a Yuz telegraph. A *female telegraph operator* sits next to him, dictating. The machine is on; slowly a white ticker tape emerges. A clock strikes: it is 7:30 p. m. Two women enter the conference room. They are members of the Council of People's Commissars staff. The older of the two is *Anna Petrovna Kizas*, while the other is a young *girl*. They begin arranging paper and pencils on the tables.

*Female telegraph operator (dictating).* ATTENTION ALL! THIS MORNING CHAIRMAN OF THE PETROGRAD CHEKA URITSKY WAS ASSASSINATED IN PETROGRAD. THE ASSASSIN HAS BEEN ARRESTED. HIS IDENTITY IS BEING DETERMINED. PRELIMINARY EVIDENCE SUGGESTS THE ASSASSINATION IS THE WORK OF THE RIGHT S-Rs. COMRADE FELIX DZERZHINSKY HAS BEEN SENT TO PETROGRAD TO HEAD THE INVESTIGATION. CHAIRMAN OF THE ALL-RUSSIA CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE SVERDLOV.

*Kizas (to the girl).* Put the little slips of paper at Vladimir Ilyich's place.

*Girl.* All right.

*Kizas.* And on the windowsill.

*Girl.* On the windowsill?

The telephone rings.

*Female telegraph operator (dictating).* ZINOVIEV, THE SMOLNY, PETROGRAD.

*Kizas (picking up the phone).* This is Kizas.

*Female telegraph operator.* MY CONVERSATION WITH RAVICH AND KALININ...

*Kizas.* The Council of People's Commissars, at eight as usual.

*Female telegraph operator.* ...LIKE SHADURSKAYA'S TELEGRAM...

*Kizas.* Vladimir Ilyich isn't here. He'll be back soon...

*Female telegraph operator.* ...LEADS ME TO THINK...

*Kizas.* No, Dzerzhinsky won't be coming, he had to go to Petrograd on urgent business.

*Female telegraph operator.* ...THAT NINE-TENTHS OF THE TOP ADMINISTRATIVE APPARATUS IN PETROGRAD...

*Kizas.* Why, don't you know?

*Female telegraph operator.* ...IS BUSY DOING NOTHING...

*Kizas.* Moisei Solomonovich Uritsky was assassinated this morning.

*Female telegraph operator.* ...I ADVISE PUTTING DOZENS...

*Kizas.* He had just arrived and walked up to the elevator when the shots were fired...

*Female telegraph operator.* ...IF NOT A HUNDRED OF YOUR BEST PEOPLE...

*Kizas.* Yes, he was detained.

*Female telegraph operator.* ...TO WORK ON ACTUALLY GETTING TRANSPORTATION RUNNING...

*Kizas.* I don't know, don't know.

*Female telegraph operator.* OTHERWISE WE ARE SUNK.

*Kizas.* All right...

*Female telegraph operator.* LENIN.

*Girl (to Kizas).* Why on the windowsill?

*Kizas.* By the end of the meeting the smoke will be so thick you could cut it with a knife. Vladimir Ilyich goes to the window and presides over the meeting from there. Put the ashtrays here, for Yenukidze and Petrovsky, the main smokers.

*Girl.* What if they don't sit there?

*Kizas.* They will. Each of them has got his own place. Yenukidze and Petrovsky moved down here not long ago; they switched with Chicherin and Krestinsky. They're always talking during meetings and Vladimir Ilyich finally let them have it, so they moved away from him. This is where Stalin sits; he's a big smoker, too, but you don't need to put an ashtray here because he's in Tsaritsyn and Pestkovsky doesn't smoke. Give Tsyurupa — over here — lots of paper. Trotsky isn't coming; he's at the front; and Sklyansky always brings his notebook. Bukharin and Rykov won't be coming either: they've gone to Serpukhov for a rally. Give Lunacharsky three pencils. There.

*Girl.* What about this glue?

*Kizas.* That's for Vladimir Ilych. He calls it the "gum arabic with the spout"; don't get confused.

*Girl.* Oh, I did on Monday! He came out of his office around midnight and said, "Get me the Food Commissariat collegium right away, please." I started calling them all and getting them out of bed. About ten minutes later he came out again, all cross. "Where's the list of the collegium?" Then I realised what he'd meant, explained to him that I'd gotten confused...

*Kizas.* What did he do?

*Girl.* At first he was upset, but then he apologised for not having been more clear and then he and I sat down and called everybody back to tell them not to come...

*Kizas.* Did you reach them in time?

*Girl.* About five of them came. Vladimir Ilyich waited up for them and apologised... Here comes Chicherin.

*Enter Chicherin.*

*Chicherin.* Good evening, comrades.

*Kizas.* Good evening, Georgy Vasilyevich.

*Girl.* Good evening.

Chicherin sits down at his place and immerses himself in papers.

*Kizas.* There... I guess that's everything... Now then: take this folder, go to the Yuz, take over dictating and send these telegrams for Vladimir Ilyich. If I need you I'll let you know.

*Girl.* Fine. *(She takes the folder of telegrams and exits.)*

*Chicherin.* Anna Petrovna, is Vladimir Ilyich in?

*Kizas.* No, he's at a rally...

*Chicherin (recalling).* That's right, today's Friday...

*Female telegraph operator (dictating).* ZINOVIEV, THE SMOLNY, PETROGRAD. HAVE JUST HEARD THAT THE DISTRICT SOVIET EVICTED VERA IVANOVNA ZASULICH AND OTHER LEADING REVOLUTIONARIES FROM WRITERS' HOUSE. THIS IS SCANDALOUS! SURELY IT IS NOT TRUE? LENIN.

*The girl goes over to the telegraph. Exits the female telegraph operator.*

*Girl (to the telegraph operator).* Good evening. We can get started.

*Male telegraph operator.* Are there very many?

*Girl (showing him the folder.)* Yes.

*Male telegraph operator.* About two hours' work. Go ahead.

*Yenukidze enters the conference room, followed by Steklov.*

*Yenukidze.* Hello, Georgy Vasilyevich!

*Chicherin (to Yenukidze).* Long time no see! *(To Steklov.)* Hello, Yuri Mikhailovich. How was the trip?

*Steklov.* So-so. What's on the agenda today? *(He reads it.)* Um-hum, um-hum...

*Kizas.* You're eighteen: the bourgeois press in Petrograd...

*Yenukidze.* The speaker: Comrade Steklov, editor of *Izvestia*.

*Steklov.* Okay...

*Yenukidze.* Georgy Vasilyevich, what's been going on here this past week? I saw Shlyapnikov and Semashko arm in arm this afternoon!

*Chicherin (smiling).* Naturally.

*Yenukidze.* But they were mortal enemies! The Civil War paled by comparison!

*Chicherin.* The day before yesterday they brought their battle to the Council. Shlyapnikov has insurance medicine and Semashko was trying to encroach on his territory. We'd just started considering the agenda when Semashko rose with an amendment. Then Shlyapnikov rose with an observation on the amendment. Then Semashko rose with a point of order. That's when Vladimir Ilyich's patience wore out and he moved to send both of them to his study, lock them in



and not let them out until they'd reached an agreement. It was unanimously adopted, with Comrade Semashko and Shlyapnikov abstaining. They were escorted to Lenin's office. An hour later they started hammering on the door — they'd reached a *de facto* agreement.

*Yenukidze (laughing)*. A splendid method! Why can't we apply it to our military strategists?

*Chicherin*. It's hopeless. For a peace conference like that you have to have different personalities. Why, is the skirmishing threatening to become a national catastrophe?

*Yenukidze*. Sverdlov has to bear the entire brunt of it. Every day he has to mediate between them.

*Chicherin*. One smart American wasn't far off when he said that "self-love is a bottomless vessel: you can pour all the great lakes into it and it still won't be full".

*Petrovsky, Krestinsky, Nogin and Stuchka enter, followed a little later by Tsyurupa, Pokrovsky and Lunacharsky. They noisily exchange greetings.*

*Petrovsky (to Steklov)*. What's happening in Petrograd? *Steklov*. Things are calm more or less.

*Nogin*. What about Uritsky?

*Steklov*. Yes, I know...

*Girl (dictating)*. ANISIMOV, ASTRAKHAN. THE SITUATION IN BAKU IS STILL NOT CLEAR TO ME. WHO IS IN POWER?...

*Steklov*. Just yesterday he and I were sitting...

*Girl* ...WHERE IS SHAUMYAN? ASK STALIN AND PROCEED AS THE CIRCUMSTANCES DICTATE...

*Steklov*. He was so excited... Had so many plans...

*Girl* ...YOU KNOW I HAVE COMPLETE FAITH IN SHAUMYAN. THE SITUATION CAN'T BE SORTED OUT FROM HERE AND IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PROVIDE QUICK ASSISTANCE. LENIN.

*Steklov*. But on the whole things are sorting themselves out there.

*Yenukidze*. Well, can you explain to me why the devil Zinoviev isn't giving us Petrograd workers? Eight thousand were supposed to be sent to the front and he gave us two. We were supposed to get one and a half thousand for the food brigades and he gave us a thousand. It's sabotage! And he's not the only one — practically the whole Petrograd Soviet is on his side. Uritsky, though, agreed with me...

*Petrovsky.* The Old Man<sup>1</sup> sent them a blistering telegram. He told them straight out that they might be to blame for the collapse of everything if they drag their feet about sending the Petrograd workers.

*Steklov.* I talked to them about it. It's not just stubbornness. It's a matter of principle.

*Krestinsky.* What kind of principle?

*Steklov.* They're afraid the Petrograd proletariat will be squandered, destroyed.

*Nogin.* Aren't we all!

*Lunacharsky.* That's the tragic dilemma our revolution faces. And not just our revolution. Who paved the way for the revolution under tsarism? Who got the millions to rise? A relatively small group of progressive, politically educated workers and the revolutionary intelligentsia. Who are the first to go to the defence of the revolution once it's triumphed? They are. Who are the first to lay down their lives? They are. Take Uritsky...

*Steklov.* But who'll take their place? That's the crucial question.

*Petrovsky.* All right, but what does Petrograd propose?

*Pokrovsky.* They want to save the best people for tomorrow — plain and simple.

*Petrovsky.* Pardon me, Mikhail Nikolayevich, but the fate of the revolution is being decided today. If the cause is lost because they weren't there, who'll need them tomorrow? What kind of socialism will they build? It's a stupid, short-sighted policy.

*Lunacharsky.* Well, you can't reason that way either, you know Grigory Ivanovich: victory at any price. What will the price be?

*Petrovsky.* I don't reason that way. I'm thinking about the future, too. But there's one thing I know: when two more divisions are needed to stop the Czechoslovaks,<sup>2</sup> and the Petrograd proletariat is just sitting there, starving to death...

*Stuchka.* But have you thought about who will take the place of those who are killed, Grigory Ivanovich?

*Petrovsky.* For each day of battle ten are born for every one who dies...

*Yenukidze.* And each day takes those ten.

*Lunacharsky.* And have you thought about the fact that all kinds of scum we kicked out the door are climbing in through the window with either Party membership cards in

their pockets or at least a red tab on their collar? Do you realise that in a predominantly peasant country like Russia there is a real danger that we'll be swallowed up by the petty bourgeoisie?

*Petrovsky.* Yes, I do. But do you agree with the Petrograd people then?

*Lunacharsky.* No, it's just that I sympathise with their fears.

*Tsyurupa.* We all do, but even so...

*Petrovsky.* It's a complicated problem, of course...

*Girl (dictating).* AVERIN, YEKATERINOSLAVL. COPY TO BUBNOV. EVERY EFFORT HAS TO BE MADE TO MOBILISE THE WORKERS IN YEKATERINOSLAVL. YOU ARE NOT BEING ENERGETIC ENOUGH. CABLE IMMEDIATELY WHAT STEPS HAVE BEEN TAKEN, REPORT ACTUAL RESULTS. LENIN.

*Petrovsky (continuing).* I visited a number of districts and got my fill of impressions. It's amazing how status spoils people. Somebody is made the head of a department and he thinks he's been named to high office. A five minute walk is beneath his dignity. He's got to have a cab. He treats the people who come to him with petitions like dirt. We were formed in prisons and penal servitude, by the whip... But these people... Take Tsyurupa here, the People's Food Commissar. Last week he fainted from hunger. Moisei Solomonovich wanted to write an article about it.

*Steklov.* Oh, Moisei... I just can't believe it.

*Tsyurupa.* I think it was Vladimir Ilyich who was handed a note at the rally last Friday, asking that Party members not be given any privileges in the sense of better rations, etc., because it'll attract shysters like flies.

*Stuchka.* Right now Party members only have one privilege — the right to be the first to die.

*Yenukidze.* All right, but who should be appointed to do the pencil pushing? A Party member? A proletarian? Where would I find them? And who would let me have them if I did? Rob the front? You can't appoint illiterates. Petty bourgeois trash worms its way in.

*Krestinsky.* But you do see the danger? Say, one of those damn old bureaucrats is in our commissariat. He sits there, spitting at the ceiling, then he calls around to find out where there's a nice cushy spot and recommends one of his pals. And the net gets bigger and bigger...

*Yenukidze.* Oh, my dear Krestinsky, I must tell you...

*Pokrovsky.* Krestinsky's right.

*Stuchka.* We need to have some means of protection. Lenin's proposal about only allowing people who were members of the party before the revolution to be elected delegates to the party congress is one way.

*Krestinsky.* Speaking of which, where is he, Anna Petrovna?

*Kizas.* At a rally. He promised to be here by eight. There's still a half hour.

*Girl (dictating).* CHEKA, KURSK. COPY TO THE GUBERNIA EXECUTIVE. IMMEDIATELY ARREST KOGAN...

The telephone rings.

*Girl.* ...MEMBER OF THE KURSK CENTRAL PURCHASING COMMITTEE, FOR NOT HELPING 120 STARVING MOSCOW WORKERS AND SENDING THEM AWAY EMPTY-HANDED...

*Kizas.* It's for Nogin.

*Nogin.* Thank you.

*Yenukidze (to Tsyurupa).* By the by, Tsyurupa, which damn old bureaucrat did we send to Kursk?

*Tsyurupa (reluctantly).* Kogan.

*Yenukidze.* Do you know what he did? There was an awful stink. I haven't seen Vladimir Ilyich so worked up for a long time. He might well bring it up this evening.

*Tsyurupa.* I've prepared a memo.

*Yenukidze.* Do you think a memo will satisfy him? Think again. What are you actually going to tell him?

*Tsyurupa.* I'll tell him that Kogan is a blockhead and should be thrown out of the party for his stupidity.

*Yenukidze.* Oh, my dear Tsyurupa, you can't get thrown out for that! Unfortunately!

*Steklov.* Oh yes you can! Marx mentions somewhere that they threw a Becker out of the First International for being, as they put it, "a hopeless idiot".

*Yenukidze.* Ilyich won't be satisfied with that either. Tsyurupa and I sent that hopeless idiot to Kursk. Oh dear, I hate to think...

*Stuchka.* Speaking of idiocy, Grigory Ivanovich, how did the Pershikova matter end?

*Krestinsky.* Which one is that?

*Petrovsky.* Remember, the girl from Tsaritsyn, Valya

Pershikova, who found some pamphlet with Ilyich's portrait and gave him a bigger beard, a moustache and glasses?

*Krestinsky.* Oh yes, I remember.

*Lunacharsky.* What happened?

*Petrovsky.* The Tsaritsyn Cheka discerned a counter-revolutionary plot and arrested the girl, but a soldier sent a telegram asking that she be released.

*Krestinsky.* Ilyich laughed. Good material for a lampoon.

*Girl (dictating).* CHAIRMAN OF THE GUBERNIA CHEKA, TSARITSYN. DEFACING A PORTRAIT IS NOT AN OFFENCE. RELEASE VALENTINA PERSHIKOVA IMMEDIATELY. CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF PEOPLE'S COMMISSARS LENIN.

*Pokrovsky (to Steklov).* Yuri Mikhailovich, it completely slipped my mind: what's the story with Gorky? Did he accept the olive branch?

*Steklov.* No. Things with Gorky are very bad. He's running around in a dither. First he defends us and cries, "Don't you dare lay a glove on Lenin!" — a Bolshevik past shows despite everything — then accuses him of *such* sins... First he damns bourgeois culture, then screams for its preservation, ignites Party feuds, then calls for unity, and so on, and so on... It's depressing to watch.

*Chicherin.* Same old thing. A year and a half now. It's a shame.

*Yenukidze.* What does that "Stormy Petrel" want, anyway?

*Pokrovsky.* He wants to show that the conditions for socialism don't exist in Russia and what we've embarked on is adventurism, plain and simple.

*Yenukidze (exploding).* Well, of course: they're not civilised, they haven't reached a certain level of culture and, can you imagine, they want socialism! Guttersnipes! Tell me, Anatoly Vasilyevich — you keep defending him — why isn't it possible to do as Vladimir Ilyich said — gain power and then use it to deliver culture? Why, I'm asking you?

*Lunacharsky.* Ask Gorky.

*Yenukidze.* They proposed discussing it in Petrograd, but he couldn't lower himself.

*Stuchka.* Avel, you mustn't speak of Gorky in that tone. When a great writer, dear to us all, especially the proletariat, comes to this, it's a tragedy.

*Lunacharsky.* Vladimir Ilyich was closer to him than any of us and despite all the pain their estrangement has caused him, he still finds other words to use.



*Yenukidze.* When Lenin breaks with someone politically, he breaks with him personally!

*Lunacharsky.* But he never lowers himself to abuse.

*Yenukidze.* I don't know what you call abuse. I agree with the comrades who say about Gorky that the revolution is incapable of pitying or burying its dead. If he wants to be an anachronism, fine.

*Pokrovsky.* You know, Avel, Gorky is worth fighting for. Otherwise, I'm sorry, but we could wind up throwing away some of our very best.

*Yenukidze.* Who do you want to fight with?

*Lunacharsky.* Most of all with him.

*Pokrovsky.* And with the worst elements of the bourgeois intelligentsia he's surrounded himself with.

*Chicherin.* The ones, Avel, who were outraged by the persecution of Tolstoy and the banning of Korolenko and were completely indifferent when the government decided in smoke-filled backrooms to draw Russia into the war.

*Lunacharsky.* That so-called universal humanism is abominable: the restriction of individual freedom arouses indignation while the slaughter of millions of individuals is silently tolerated.

*Steklov.* No, comrades, you're wrong. In all fairness it has to be said that Sukhanov's crowd sickens Gorky, but they've got him in an iron grip. It's like the joke: the soldier cries, "I've captured a Turk!" "Then bring him here!" "He won't go!" "Then come here yourself!" "He won't let me!"

*Yenukidze.* It really is a shame, of course...

*Stuchka.* I'm sure he'll return, but something's needed... Time, maybe?

There is a pause.

*Kollontai (appearing in the doorway).* Hello, I'm not late, am I?

*Krestinsky.* Vladimir Ilyich isn't here yet.

*Lunacharsky.* Did you speak today?

*Kollontai.* Yes, at the Grain Exchange. With Ilyich. He went somewhere else after that.

*Tsyurupa.* Was it hard, Alexandra Mikhailovna?

*Kollontai.* Very. There's only one thing on their minds, and that's grain. Ilyich didn't promise anything, told them the truth.

Enter *Vinokurov*.

*Yenukidze*. Here's *Vinokurov*.

*Vinokurov*. Good evening. I just spoke with *Petrograd*. *Uritsky's* funeral is tomorrow. The mood at the factories and plants is jittery. The workers are upset and want to take revenge. Party members are trying to talk them out of taking to the streets, but excesses can't be ruled out. *Dzerzhinsky's* begun questioning the assassin.

*Petrovsky*. They'll prevent people from taking to the streets, but a thorough investigation and public trial have to be held there.

*Krestinsky*. A damn shame about *Moisei Solomonovich*... Remember those lines he liked so much: "The road is near an end, quiet are the leaves. Wait, wait a little, friend; you, too, shall find ease."

*Girl (dictating)*. ZINOVIEV, THE SMOLNY, PETROGRAD...

*Stuchka*. Anna Petrovna, would you please call the factory and ask if the rally is over yet?

*Kizas*. Right away.

*Girl*. ...A RELATIVE OF A MEMBER OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL-DEMOCRATS' CENTRAL COMMITTEE

*Kizas*. Six-two-one-two...

*Girl*. ...THE FORMER BARRISTER VIKTOR IVANOVICH DOBROVOLSKY...

*Kizas*. Please connect me with the factory committee.

*Girl*. ...HER HUSBAND IS IN SOVIET EMPLOY...

*Kizas*. Comrade, could you please tell me whether the rally has ended?

*Girl*. ...CAME TO ME TO ASK THAT HE BE RELEASED...

*Kizas*. Thank you very much. The rally has just ended. *Vladimir Ilyich* will be here shortly.

*Girl*. ...HER MOTIVATION: HE LEFT POLITICS IN 1907. HE IS OLD, SICK AND HAD A BAD CASE OF PNEUMONIA NOT LONG BEFORE HIS ARREST...

Enter *Zagorsky*.

*Zagorsky*. Good evening, Comrades!

*Girl*. ...A VITAL FIFTY YEAR OLD HAS BECOME A PITIFUL, DECREPIT OLD MAN. THE FAMILY CAN-

NOT MAKE ENDS MEET AS HE WAS THE SOLE BREADWINNER...

*Zagorsky* (noticing that everyone is in low spirits, asks *Kollontai*). Why's everybody so glum?

*Kollontai*. Uritsky...

*Girl*. ...PLEASE LOOK INTO THE MATTER AND CONSIDER WHETHER HE CAN BE RELEASED ON BAIL. I WOULD APPRECIATE IT IF YOU COULD LET ME KNOW THE CHEKA'S OPINION AS WELL. YOURS, LENIN.

*Kollontai* (to *Zagorsky*). You should tell us something. Cheer everybody up!

*Zagorsky*. You know, I'm out of sorts myself... Oh, all right, I'll give it a try. (*Loudly*.) Comrades, what happened to Lunacharsky and Pokrovsky today? I mean, you can't help but feel sorry for them...

*Lunacharsky* (to *Pokrovsky*). Here we go!

*Pokrovsky*. All we can do is play along.

*Zagorsky*. I know what's the matter. I mean the burden we placed on the Education Commissariat with monumental propaganda! <sup>3</sup> Just think of having to decorate Moscow and Petrograd with sculptures and busts? Where are the materials to come from? The talent? Well, presumably the Education Commissariat can take care of that. But now telling Sofia Perovskaya's <sup>4</sup> head from Cheops' pyramid — that's a much taller order.

*Kollontai*. It's not a monument, comrades, it's a disgrace! A blot on the landscape! It should be torn down without delay!

*Lunacharsky*. You see, the monument is executed in the cubist style and that means...

*Zagorsky*. Yes, what does that mean?

Lunacharsky realises he has swallowed the bait and waves his hand in a gesture of defeat.

I was riding down Tverskaya St. just now and I saw an enormous mountain of wood. They say it's Yemelian Pugachev <sup>5</sup>...

*Vinokurov*. That's the Health Commissariat's firewood.

*Zagorsky*. You don't say! Damn good likeness! Why are you laughing, comrades? It's not nice to place this monumental burden on Pokrovsky and Lunacharsky, comrades, and then laugh. You laugh, Comrade Tsyurupa, but what are your

bread difficulties compared with the problem of the Radishchev<sup>6</sup> bust. I mean, just think — our comrades made a bust and achieved a likeness, you understand, a likeness! They put it on its pedestal but when they came back the next morning it was gone! Stolen! Who did it? Preliminary evidence suggests it was the girls from one of the milliner's — they say it's great for fittings. Of course, a second bust could be made but the People's Commissar and his deputy are afraid that the sculptors won't achieve a likeness the second time around. They were just lucky the first time. Why are you laughing, comrades? Futurism is a phenomenon that needs to be given serious study. And as for the fact that Karl Marx in his old age looks like Frederick Engels in his youth, well...

*Lunacharsky (upset).* You don't understand futurism at all! It's an important phenomenon that needs to be given serious attention...

*Pokrovsky (to Lunacharsky).* Now, now... *(to Zagorsky).* It's high time you understood.

*Lunacharsky (to Pokrovsky).* Now, now...

*Zagorsky.* I confess, comrades: I don't understand. If I did I'd know what to do about this note... *(He fishes out a note and reads.)* "Dear Vladimir Mikhailovich, I listened to Vinogradov's report on busts and monuments today, and am extremely upset: nothing has been done for months, not a single bust is in place, and the disappearance of the Radishchev bust is a farce. There is no bust of Marx for display outdoors, and nothing is being done about revolutionary slogans and signs for the streets. The Moscow Soviet and the People's Commissariat for Education are clearly sabotaging the effort and pointing the finger at one another. Dash off an article for *Pravda* that will nail the saboteurs and dillydalliers down. As for the heads of those organisations, Kamenev and Lunacharsky, I propose that they should simply be strung up and the news announced with fanfare to the readers."

*Lunacharsky.* After that Vladimir Ilyich and I went to the exhibition of monument designs and the matter was put to rest.

*Zagorsky.* Really? Please, don't keep us on tenterhooks, Anatoly Vasilyevich. Tell us what happened!

*Lunacharsky (with animation).* As you know, we removed the statue of Alexander III<sup>7</sup> by Christ the Saviour Church, which raised the question of what should be put in its place?

We organised an exhibition of designs. A fair number of artists working in different styles are taking part. Vladimir Ilyich and I went to the exhibition. It just so happened that the day before...

*Zagorsky.* Yes, go on!

*Lunacharsky (looks at Zagorsky, then laughs).* Oh! You tell it, I'm not going to deprive you of the pleasure.

*All.* Tell us, Vladimir Mikhailovich!

Tell us!

Please do!

*Zagorsky.* No, this has to be acted out. Where's Tsyurupa? Alexander Dmitriyevich, you be Ilyich. He just has a couple of lines. (*Zagorsky whispers something to Tsyurupa.*) Got it? I'll be Lunacharsky. Or perhaps you'd rather play yourself, Anatoly Vasilyevich?

*Lunacharsky.* No, no, you do it better.

*Zagorsky.* Thank you for your vote of confidence. Now then, comrades, we arrived at the exhibition of forty works the likes of which... Well, watch Tsyurupa's face and you'll see for yourselves. We started our tour with a monument to the World Proletariat, portrayed as something triangular... Alexander Dmitriyevich, there should be an expression of interminable anguish in your eyes. There you go. That's it.

*Zagorsky and Tsyurupa tour the "exhibition". Each of those present pretends to be a work. Tsyurupa portrays Lenin with great tact, gently and affectionately. The "works", which he studies carefully, trying to comprehend them, appal him.*

(*to Tsyurupa*). How do you like that monument, Vladimir Ilyich?

*Tsyurupa (as Lenin, sighing deeply).* You know, I can't make heads or tails of it. Ask Lunacharsky...

*Zagorsky.* However, comrades, it must be said to Anatoly Vasilyevich's credit that he didn't like any of that rubbish either. (*As Lunacharsky.*) I don't see anything worthy of consideration here, Vladimir Ilyich.

*Tsyurupa (as Lenin, relieved).* Thank goodness! That's a load off my mind. I must admit I thought you'd put some futurist scarecrow there. And then what? Take it down, too?

*Zagorsky.* And that is how Ilyich's introduction to futurism came to its inglorious conclusion.

*Lunacharsky.* Well, unlike some people who shall remain anonymous, Vladimir Ilyich does not force his aesthetic tastes on others!



A car screeches to a halt outside.

*Petrovsky.* Here he is. Can you imagine how they must have rushed. He knew he was going to be late.

*Nogin.* Comrades, as far as I know this is the first time Ilyich has ever been late to a meeting of the Council of People's Commissars.

*Kollontai.* Why not apply his own rule — fine him for being late?

*People's Commissars.* Yes! That's right!

*Tsyurupa.* And Ilyich will say, "Comrades, I'm fifteen minutes late. Kindly forgive me. What happened was..."

*People's Commissars.* Sorry!

No, we won't!

Fine Ilyich!

Fine him!

*Tsyurupa (as Lenin, laughs).* Oh, have it your way... There! *(He gets out some money and puts it on the table.)*

The door is thrown open by *Ulyanova.*

*Ulyanova.* Comrades! Vladimir Ilyich... He's been shot... They just brought him... Quick! Get a doctor! *(She exits.)*

Everyone is paralysed.

*Telegraph Operator (to the girl).* Dictate!

*Girl (crying).* I can't!

*Vinokurov (runs after Ulyanova).* I am a doctor. I remember a thing or two from the front!

The *People's Commissars* hurry into Lenin's apartment.

*Telegraph Operator (to the girl).* Dictate, I said! Dictate! Dictate!

*Girl (dictating).* TAMBOV GUBERNIA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. COPY TO BORISOGLEBSK UYEZD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. HAVE RECEIVED A COMPLAINT FROM IVAN BOGDANOV REGARDING THE ARREST OF HIS SON VLADIMIR, 17...

*Gil* comes out of the room where Lenin evidently lies and rushes to the telephone. *People's Commissars* run back and forth along the hall; some enter the room where Lenin is, others remain in the anteroom.

*Gil (into the telephone).* Bonch-Bruyevich, please... Vladimir Dmitriyevich, come quick! Vladimir Ilyich's been wounded!... In his apartment!

*Vinokurov* runs out of the room.

*Vinokurov.* Get bandages and iodine... (*He goes back into the room.*)

*Gil (into the telephone).* Get me the pharmacy!

*Ulyanova.* We don't have any bandages.

*Gil (into the telephone).* The pharmacy, any pharmacy!

*Ulyanova.* We don't have any bandages!

Enter *Kizas*.

*Gil.* You can tear up a shirt or a sheet... (*Into the telephone.*) Hello? Hello? Pharmacy?

*Ulyanova.* Of course, right away... Here's one of Volodya's shirts... Please tear it up into bandages, Comrade Gil. You seem to know how.

*Gil* rips the shirt into strips.

*Girl (continuing to dictate).* ...DOWN WITH BRONCHITIS, FOR SABOTAGE...

*Ulyanova (to Kizas).* Call Krestinskaya and Velichkina — they're doctors, they'll have bandages...

*Kizas.* Right away... (*She rushes to the telephone.*)

*Girl.* ...CHECK THE ILLNESS, INEXPERIENCE, YOUTH OF THE ACCUSED. PARTICULARLY LOOK INTO WHETHER THE ACTUAL SABOTEURS WERE NOT, IN FACT, THIRTY EMPLOYEES OF THE LAND COMMISSARIAT, WHO REFUSED TO DO THE JOB AND DUMPED IT ON BOGDANOV. WIRE THE RESULTS OF YOUR INVESTIGATION. CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF PEOPLE'S COMMISSARS LENIN.

*Vinokurov (appearing in the doorway).* He's complaining about his heart. Get the doctors to hurry. I've done what I can but I don't have anything. Boil water. Hurry the doctors up!

*Nogin* walks over to the door.

No, no, don't go in there, he's lost consciousness... Asked me to take off his collar and tie... And lost consciousness...

*Ulyanova.* What is going on? What should we do?

*Bonch-Bruevich* runs into the apartment carrying bandages and vials of medicine. He gives everything to *Gil*, who disappears into the room.

*Krestinsky.* Quick, Vladimir Dmitriyevich!

*Bonch-Bruevich (to Ulyanova).* Courage, Maria Ilyichna! The most important thing is to stay calm. Let's give our full attention to him. (*To Kizas.*) Don't cry, it's only upsetting. (*Exits into the next room.*)

*Kizas.* I won't... (*Sobs.*)

*Girl.* CHAIRMAN OF THE PETROGRAD SOVIET, THE SMOLNY, PETROGRAD. IS IT TRUE THAT YOU HAVE TAKEN THE ARCHBISHOP OF MOGILEV, FR. ROPP, HOSTAGE? PLEASE INFORM ME OF THE CONDITIONS OF HIS RELEASE, WHICH THE POPE WOULD LIKE TO OBTAIN. LENIN.

*Zagorsky.* Yakov Mikhailovich is speaking at Vvedensky House, they've gone to fetch him.

*Ulyanova (crying).* I had a feeling... I knew this was going to happen... I didn't go to work. Zagorsky called and asked him not to go. I asked Bukharin to dine with us and talk him out of speaking. Nikolai Ivanovich came, we had dinner together, and he spent a whole hour persuading Volodya not to speak. Volodya kept laughing it off, but in the end he gave his word that he wouldn't go. Nikolai Ivanovich left completely calm, and I stopped worrying too, but then at six o'clock I looked up and there was Volodya in his coat. He laughed and said that he was going... I asked him to take me with him but he wouldn't. And when he was there some woman... three shots...

*Vinokurov (appearing in the doorway).* Where are the doctors? Hurry them up! (*Exits.*)

*Bonch-Bruevich* enters and rushes to the telephone.

*Bonch-Bruevich.* Fourteen, please!... Lyolya, where's Mama?... On her way?... Good... My wife will be here shortly. (*Into the telephone.*) Twenty-eight, please! Comrade Mal'kov, this is Bonch-Bruevich. Place the entire Kremlin guard and all Red Army troops on full alert. Post a round-the-clock guard at all the gates, the wall and the entrances to the Council of People's Commissars and the Central Executive Committee. Vladimir Ilyich has been shot!

*Gil exits from the room.*

*Gil (to the People's Commissars).* When we brought him here we wanted to carry him in, but he was having none of it. Walked up all three flights of stairs with the blood spreading after him... Walked over here and collapsed in this chair.

*Ulyanova.* When he saw me he started to joke, "It's nothing serious, just messed up my arm. Good thing it's the left one — they knew I've got a desk job..." (*She bursts into tears.*)

*Velichkina runs in, carrying a doctor's bag.*

*Steklov. Velichkina!*

*Vinokurov (appearing in the doorway).* Unconscious.

*Velichkina.* For long?

*Vinokurov.* Yes.

*Both disappear into the room.*

*Girl (dictating).* YELETS UYEZD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. IMMEDIATELY INVESTIGATE THE CONFISCATION OF RYE AT THE YELETS STATION FROM GORYACHEV AND COMPANY...

*The telephone rings.*

*Bonch-Bruyevich (picking up the receiver).* Yes... His condition is grave, Yakov Mikhailovich. He comes to for literally seconds at a time. He asked for you... Yes, we called them... Yes, I will... Fine.

*Enter Velichkina from the next room.*

*Girl.* ...WERE THEY GIVEN RECEIPTS, WAS THE CONFISCATION LEGAL, SHOULD THEY NOT BE RETURNED ALL OR PART? WIRE. CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF PEOPLE'S COMMISSARS LENIN.

*Velichkina.* I'm afraid he'll go into shock. I gave him morphine. Have any surgeons been called?

*Petrovsky.* Minz.

*Velichkina.* Minz, that's good. We won't do anything until the surgeons arrive. We'll just do what we can to ensure

he doesn't take a turn for the worse and undress him a bit, as much as we can...

A vial falls and breaks in the room. Everyone jumps.

Don't worry, it was a vial of ammonium chloride. I need a rag.

*Lunacharsky* goes to get one.

*Girl.* BOLDYREV, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, ZADONSK. TAKE AS DECISIVE ACTION AS POSSIBLE AGAINST THE KULAKS AND THEIR NEW-FOUND FRIENDS, THOSE LEFT SOCIALIST REVOLUTIONARY BASTARDS...

*Zagorsky.* I called him and tried to talk him out of it and now...

Silence. The girl can be heard dictating a telegram.

*Girl.* ...APPEAL TO THE POOR. ORGANISE THEM...

*Lunacharsky* vanishes into the next room with a rag. *Ulyanova* comes out carrying a pair of shoes, a jacket, overcoat and shirt. She takes everything out to the kitchen. *Vinokurov* appears in the doorway of the room and holds bandages out to *Kizas*.

*Vinokurov.* Please wash these. (*Exits.*)

*Kizas.* Right away. (*She goes into the kitchen.*)

*Girl.* ...ASK YELETS FOR ASSISTANCE. THE BLOODSUCKING KULAKS MUST BE PUT DOWN RUTHLESSLY. WIRE. CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF PEOPLE'S COMMISSARS LENIN.

*Lunacharsky* enters, rag in hand, and goes to the kitchen.

*Vinokurov* (*appearing in the doorway*). Comrades, get the doctors moving!

*Gil.* They're here! Minz and Weissbrot!

*Minz* and *Weissbrot* hurry into the apartment. Everyone looks at them hopefully. They do not greet anyone but swiftly move towards the next room, pulling off their overcoats as they go. *Minz* is already wearing his white coat. *Weissbrot* rolls up his sleeves.



*Vinokurov.* Gunshot wounds inflicted from behind. Considerable loss of blood.

*Minz.* Morphine.

*Velichkina.* I've already given him a shot.

*Minz.* Good.

*Vinokurov.* He's complaining of chest pains.

*Minz.* He needs to be given camphor.

*Velichkina.* We don't have any.

*Minz.* Where's my bag. Take some from there.

*Vinokurov.* He's been unconscious the whole time. He came to for a while just now when a vial of ammonium chloride broke.

*The doctors go into the next room, from which their voices can be heard.*

*Voice of Vinokurov.* Vladimir Ilyich... Vladimir Ilyich... Can you hear me?

*Voice of Weissbrot.* Vladimir Ilyich, it's me, Weissbrot. Dr. Weissbrot. He's not coming round.

*Voice of Minz.* Let's start our examination... Um-hum, Um-hum. One in the arm. Where's the other? Here?... No. Here?... No... Bad, very bad...

*Voice of Weissbrot.* Where is the other one?

*Voice of Minz.* No major vessels have been damaged... Where is it? Do you see an exit hole? Where's the bullet's path? Where is it? Where is it? Here?

*Voice of Weissbrot (anxiously).* Impossible! What about the esophagus?

*Voice of Minz.* Yes, yes, here. Here it is! Can you feel it?

*Voice of Weissbrot.* Impossible... Yes, there it is...

*Voice of Minz.* Close the door!

*Everyone moves away from the door, which is closed.*

*Girl (dictating)* KNYAGININO, SECOND ZAPYANSKI COMMUNITY? KNYAGININO. COPY TO ICHALKA. ANY AND ALL MEASURES TO FORCE THE PEASANTS TO WORK FIELDS COLLECTIVELY ARE IMPERMISSIBLE. FAILURE TO COMPLY WILL BE PUNISHED WITH ALL THE SEVERITY OF THE REVOLUTIONARY LAW. CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF PEOPLE'S COMMISSARS LENIN.

Enter *Velichkina* from the next room.

*Velichkina (distraughtly)*. We need some cardboard to make a splint for his arm.

*Lunacharsky*. Where's the bullet?

*Velichkina* silently points at her throat. *Bonch-Bruyevich* rips the cover off a ledger and hands it to *Velichkina*, who vanishes into the next room. *Lunacharsky* follows her. *Vinokurov* comes out of the next room and everyone gathers round him.

*Vinokurov*. He came to and said, "Why are they making me suffer? They should have killed me outright." Then he lost consciousness again... Lemons, we need lemons. He's terribly thirsty but he mustn't have anything to drink. They're afraid his esophagus has been damaged.

Enter *Velichkina* from the next room.

*Petrovsky*. Well?

*Velichkina (nervously buttoning and unbuttoning her coat)*. The wound is extremely serious... I would even say fatal, but there are a few hopeful signs... The next two or three hours will tell ... are crucial... The bandaging was very painful... (*Exits into the next room.*)

*Sverdlov* walks briskly down the hall toward the apartment. *Ulyanova* rushes to him. He hugs her then silently strokes her hand, too overcome to say anything.

*Ulyanova*. He asked for you, Yakov Mikhailovich.

*Sverdlov*. What's the situation now?

*Weissbrot (appearing in the doorway)*. Unconscious.

*Minz (appearing in the doorway)*. We just finished bandaging him.

*Sverdlov*. What's your assessment?

*Minz*. Very serious. He has a bad wound in the chest cavity.

*Sverdlov*. What can be done?

*Minz*. We need to call an internist in. I am very concerned about one of his lungs. It was punctured by a bullet.

*Sverdlov*. Obukh will be here shortly. He's addressing a rally; we're finding out which one now.

*Weissbrot*. Obukh, that's good. He knows a great deal about Vladimir Ilyich.

*Minz.* Vladimir Ilyich has been in Obukh's care?

*Weissbrot.* Yes.

*Sverdlov.* Comrades, think, what else can be done? We'll do everything we can and more.

*Velichkina (in the doorway).* He came round and heard your voice, Yakov Mikhailovich. He'd like you to come in.

Exit *Sverdlov*, *Minz*, *Weissbrot* and *Velichkina* into the next room. A moment later *Minz*, *Weissbrot* and *Velichkina* come back out, closing the door behind them.

He asked us to leave them alone.

Silence. All eyes are trained on the white door.

*Girl (dictating).* ASTRAKHAN GUBERNIA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. COPY TO THE GUBERNIA COMMUNIST ORGANISATION. IS IT TRUE THAT THERE IS ALREADY TALK IN ASTRAKHAN OF EVACUATION? IF SO, THEN RUTHLESS MEASURES MUST BE TAKEN AGAINST COWARDS, AND RELIABLE PEOPLE OF STAUNCH CHARACTER MUST IMMEDIATELY BE APPOINTED TO ORGANISE THE DEFENCE OF ASTRAKHAN AND CONDUCT THE MOST RESOLUTE POLICY OF FIGHTING TO THE END SHOULD THE BRITISH ADVANCE. WIRE A DETAILED REPLY. CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF PEOPLE'S COMMISSARS LENIN.

Suddenly the door to the room is thrown open by *Sverdlov*.

*Sverdlov.* Comrades! He's worse!

*The doctors* rush into the next room.

*Voice of Minz.* Morphine! Another dose of morphine!

*Voice of Velichkina.* His pulse is bad!

*Voice of Weissbrot.* His throat is bleeding!

*Voice of Minz.* The left pleura is filled with blood. Absolute calm. Cover him with a sheet.

*Ulyanova.* No, not a sheet! It's too horrible!

*Bonch-Bruyevich.* The windows are open — he could catch cold. A blanket is heavy but a sheet doesn't weigh anything...

*Krupskaya* trudges down the hall, enters the apartment, stops and looks silently at *Gil*.

*Krupskaya (with difficulty)*. No, no... Don't say anything, just tell me whether he's alive or dead?

*Gil*. Slightly wounded! Honest! Slightly wounded!

*Krupskaya* stands silently, head bowed.  
*Sverdlov* goes over to her.

*Krupskaya*. What will happen now?

*Sverdlov*. Ilyich and I have talked it all over...

*Krupskaya (to herself)*. Talked it all over... That means there's no hope...

*Ulyanova*. Nadya, he came to... Go to him...

*Krupskaya*. It'll just make him more upset... (*She exits into the next room.*)

Everyone is dejected and silent.

*Girl (dictating)*. DETACHMENT CHIEF IVANOV-KAVKAZSKY, BIRYULEVO RYAZAN-URALSKAYA. A COMPLAINT HAS BEEN LODGED THAT YOU REQUISITIONED WRITING MATERIALS INCLUDING THE STATION-MASTER'S DESK. RETURN THE MATERIALS IMMEDIATELY. WIRE AN EXPLANATION. COMPLY WITHOUT DELAY. I DEMAND LOYALTY TO THE RAILWAY WORKERS. CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF PEOPLE'S COMMISSARS LENIN.

*Krupskaya* returns.

*Ulyanova*. What did he say?

*Krupskaya*. "You're back, Nadya? You're tired... Go lie down." He's not making any sense, his eyes say something completely different... I'll sit here... I'll be able to see his face, but he won't see me... (*She takes a chair and places it near the door.*) Who's that with him?

*Ulyanova*. Minz and Weissbrot.

*Krupskaya*. And with his back towards us?

*Ulyanova*. Lunacharsky. He just stands there looking. I tried to make him leave but he wouldn't go.

*Zagorsky (to Krupskaya)*. I talked to him on the phone,

but he didn't want to listen. I didn't have the resolve to insist. And now...

*Girl.* BOKIY, SPECIAL DEPARTMENT, SAMARA. IS THERE SERIOUS EVIDENCE AGAINST LEONID SERGEYEVICH VIVIEN? IS IT ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY THAT HE BE SENT TO SAMARA? I AM TOLD THAT THERE HAS BEEN SOME MISTAKE, SO I AM KEEPING HIM IN MOSCOW FOR THE TIME BEING. LUNACHARSKY HAS INTERCEDED IN HIS BEHALF. CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF PEOPLES COMMISSARS LENIN.

*Lunacharsky enters, staggering in his grief, blind to everything. Kollontai helps him sit down.*

*Lunacharsky.* "What's there to see, Anatoly Vasilyevich," he said. "Go rest..." His eyes try to smile but his forehead is yellow and waxy...

*Voice of Minz.* Hypodermic!

*The doctors suddenly start bustling about, running to and fro.*

*Ulyanova.* Nadya...

*Krupskaya.* No, I won't leave... You don't have to worry about me.

*Weissbrot (appearing in the doorway).* Yakov Mikhailovich, we need Obukh right now.

*Sverdlov.* He's coming... Two cars have been sent... Any minute now...

*Weissbrot.* Please take everybody away.

*Sverdlov.* I understand. I'll be in the conference room of the People's Commissars. If anything happens...

*Weissbrot.* Fine. (*Exits into the next room.*)

*Sverdlov.* Let's go, comrades.

One after another the People's Commissars follow him out of the room.

*Girl (dictating).* PRESIDIUM OF THE MOSCOW SOVIET OF WORKERS' AND RED ARMY DEPUTIES. DEAR COMRADES! I RECEIVED YOUR NOTE, NO. TWENTY-FOUR-THOUSAND-NINE-HUNDRED-SIXTY-TWO, WITH THE EXTRACT FROM THE PRESIDIUM'S RESOLUTION. I MUST IN ALL CON-



SCIENCE SAY THAT THE RESOLUTION IS SO POLITICALLY INLETTERED AND SILLY THAT IT MAKES ME ILL...

*Telegraph operator.* Go on.

*Girl (crying).* I can't... The day before yesterday I went to the Hermitage. I saw Chaliapin arrive, but then a bunch of thugs surrounded him so I sidled away and ran. When I told Vladimir Ilyich the next morning he gave me such a dressing down, such a dressing down. He said, "Why didn't you take steps to have the thugs arrested? You have to fight for the truth with your fists. You're a Party member! Go call and find out how Chaliapin is." He wouldn't rest 'til I had. And today when he found out that members of the People's Will who'd been in prison are in Catherine Hospital, he and Nadezhda Konstantinovna got a parcel together and had me take it over. And he told me I'd be doing it from now on...

Slowly and very quietly the grief-stricken *People's Commissars* return to the conference room and take their places at the table. *Sverdlov* brings one of the chairs that is against the wall to the table and sits down. Everyone is silent. The silence in the conference room becomes unbearable.

*Sverdlov.* Comrades... No one can take Vladimir Ilyich's place. We won't even try... All we can do is to try and make up for his absence to some extent. Triple calm... Triple organisation... We must ... uninterrupted leadership. I ask you all to pull yourselves together ... collect your thoughts... Everyone has a copy of the agenda for this meeting of the Council of People's Commissars. Does anyone have comments or amendments?

There is a long pause.

No. Comrades, I can't... I can't right now.

*Girl.* ...YOU WRITE: "THE PRESIDIUM IS COMPELLED TO DECLINE RESPONSIBILITY..." THAT IS HOW SILLY YOUNG LADIES ACT, NOT MATURE POLITICIANS... "DECLINING RESPONSIBILITY" IS WHAT SILLY YOUNG LADIES AND SILLY RUSSIAN INTELLECTUALS DO. FORGIVE ME FOR PUTTING MY OPINION SO BLUNTLY AND ACCEPT COMMUNIST GREETINGS FROM ONE WHO HOPES THAT JAIL WILL TEACH YOU NOT TO ABUSE POWER BY

## INACTION AND WHO HAS BEEN DEEPLY UPSET BY YOUR CONDUCT. LENIN.

*Nogin.* Let's postpone this meeting until tomorrow. Same time, same agenda.

*Sverdlov.* Yes, of course. We'll postpone it until tomorrow. But maybe there is some urgent business? Business we don't have any right to put off?

*Tsyurupa.* Yes, there's one item. It concerns grain. I realise that this is not the time, but you must understand the Food Commissariat's position. We are responsible for grain. You adopted a decision that obliged us, among others, to combat profiteering. Not a murmur did you hear from us, and we achieved the first results. But the Moscow City Soviet's decree has thrown everything into disarray. The whole grain situation is threatened. There's not a second to lose.

*Steklov.* What's the matter?

*Tsyurupa.* The Moscow Soviet is allowing residents to bring 24 kilos of foodstuffs into the city. Speculators and profiteers have jumped at the chance. All our work has been thrown into disarray. Kamenev is running the Moscow Soviet like an autocrat. We demand that he be reprimanded and the Moscow Soviet's resolution be rescinded. When the right hand does one thing and the left hand does another, total anarchy is the result. Otherwise I'll have to ask you to accept the resignations of the entire collegium.

*Zagorsky.* And how are you going to feed Moscow? You're combating profiteering? Fine! But give the city grain! You're not doing that! What alternative does the Moscow Soviet have? People are turning to it for grain — they gave up on your commissariat long ago! And the Moscow Soviet's resolution was the right one to adopt in this situation without question. If the "24 kilo policy" saves Moscow from starvation but interferes with the fight against profiteers, then I say hurray for the "24 kilo policy" and down with the Food Commissariat, which is powerless to feed the people!

*Tsyurupa (restraining himself).* How can you say that and hold your head up! On the 26th, when the Council of People's Commissars considered the decree on preferential grain transports the Moscow Soviet's resolutions remained an open question thanks to the demagogic harangues of the Moscow people, who it's now clear take their cue from

their Secretary. Nevertheless, I propose that the decision of the Moscow Soviet be rescinded this way: the Council of People's Commissars will adopt and promulgate a resolution that names the date when the "24 kilo policy" will end — say, the 15th of September.

*Krestinsky*. Will there be grain by the 15th?

*Tsyurupa*. There should be.

*Yenukidze*. The Petrograd Soviet passed a resolution like the Moscow Soviet's. The Anti-Profiteer Squads are groaning that they don't know what to do.

*Zagorsky*. Tsyurupa's word about demagoguery carry the same weight as his promises to feed the whole country.

*Tsyurupa (exploding)*. And your and Kamenev's activities are nothing less than sabotage!

*Sverdlov (shouting)*. Comrades!

*Girl (dictating)*. PENZA GUBERNIA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, COPY TO THE GUBERNIA COMMUNIST ORGANISATION. THE INFIGHTING AMONG PARTY MEMBERS IS DEPLORABLE IN THE EXTREME. IT WILL BE A DISGRACE IF THESE CONFLICTS ARE NOT RESOLVED. ELECT A COMMISSION RIGHT AWAY TO RESOLVE THEM IN TWO DAYS BY, FOR EXAMPLE, DIVIDING THE UYEZDS BETWEEN THE MOST DISTINGUISHED PARTY WORKERS IN ORDER TO SEPARATE THE WARRING PARTIES. WIRE THE COMMISSION'S DECISION. LENIN.

A long pause. *Tsyurupa* and *Zagorsky* regain their composure.

*Zagorsky*. I beg your pardon, Alexander Dmitriyevich... but ... we must have grain, it's imperative. We have to think of something...

*Tsyurupa*. Yes, yes, of course, I understand what you're saying, Vladimir Mikhailovich. Please accept my apologies.

*Sverdlov (to Tsyurupa)*. What is Vladimir Ilyich's opinion? Does he support you?

*Tsyurupa*. On the 26th he did not have a definite view on the subject. It remained an open question. I spoke with him on the telephone this morning. He didn't say anything definite, just promised to think about it.

*Petrovsky*. Can you realistically supply Moscow with grain now?

*Tsyurupa*. Not today, but tomorrow we can.

*Sverdlov*. Anyone else? Questions, proposals...

*Chicherin.* It certainly does present a dilemma: both sides are right.

*Stuchka.* The solution Alexander Dmitriyevich proposed is the only possible one.

*Nogin.* It comes down to actual grain.

*Sverdlov.* Yes, we can only make a decision when there is a realistic chance of supplying grain, as Petrovsky says.

*Tsyurupa.* Literally within days.

*Sverdlov.* Alexander Dmitriyevich, a decision will be made literally within days. People should have something definite to go on. Saying the "we should have grain soon" isn't giving them anything definite to go on. When you tell us that grain is on its way, it will be here on such-and-such a day we'll vote. Any objections? Zagorsky?

*Zagorsky.* No.

*Sverdlov.* Tsyurupa?

*Tsyurupa.* No.

*Sverdlov.* Then it's decided.

*Girl (dictating).* TURLO, PENZA GUBERNIA COMMITTEE. COPY TO MINKIN. I DO NOT UNDERSTAND HOW MINKIN COULD REFUSE TO CARRY OUT THE RESOLUTION PASSED BY THE GUBERNIA COMMITTEE...

*Sverdlov (to Kollontai).* Alexandra Mikhailovna, would you please find out how things are there? And ask Gil to step in.

*Exit Kollontai.* The People's Commissars are silent.

*Girl.* ...I HOPE THIS IS JUST A MISUNDERSTANDING. AT THIS CRITICAL JUNCTURE IN THE WAR I INSIST THAT EVERYONE WORK TOGETHER AMIABLY WITH THE GREATEST DETERMINATION, BOWING TO THE MAJORITY, AND THAT ANY CONFLICTS NOT BE ALLOWED TO INTERFERE WITH WORK BUT BE REFERRED TO THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE. LENIN.

*Enter Gil.*

*Sverdlov.* Please tell us what happened in detail, Comrade Gil.

*Gil sits down at the table. He is noticeably upset.*

*Gil.* We went to Michelson after the Grain Exchange. Lots of people were in the courtyard when we drove in. There weren't any bodyguards with us in the car or in the courtyard. Nobody came out to meet Vladimir Ilyich, not the head of the trade union or anybody else... Right. So, he got out by himself and went inside. I turned the car around and placed it at the exit from the courtyard, like this, about ten steps from the door. After ten minutes or so a woman came up to me... Oh, there was nothing special about her, except that she was carrying a briefcase. She said, "I guess Comrade Lenin's come, hasn't he?" I told her that I didn't know who it was. She laughed and said, "How can a chauffeur not know who he's driving around?" And I said, "How should I know which speaker it is? You can't remember them all." She stopped pestering me and went, um, into the building. Nobody else came up to me. About an hour later people began pouring out of the building — that meant the rally was over so I started the car. Vladimir Ilyich came out surrounded by this crowd and I could hear him answering questions while he walked towards me. And when he had turned towards the auto there was a shot from behind. I was looking at him at that moment. I turned my head and saw the same woman aim and fire two more times. I ran towards her and pulled out my revolver. She threw her Browning at my feet and ran towards the gate. I went after her. I wanted to shoot but then I got scared: there was a stampede for the gate and I was afraid I might hit somebody. Then I suddenly remembered that Vladimir Ilyich was alone and I rushed back to him. People were shouting, "They've killed him! They've killed him!" and running towards the gate. There was a jam there, and Vladimir Ilyich was lying on the ground all alone, nobody was near him. The head of the trade union committee hadn't come out of the building yet.

*Kollontai* returns. Everyone turns toward her, she shakes her head and sits down at her place.

*Lunacharsky.* Well? Well? How is he?

*Kollontai.* No change.

*Tsyurupa.* Go on, Comrade Gil.

*Gil.* I bent over him. He was lying face down on the



ground; this cheek had sand on it. I said, "Vladimir Ilyich!", and he opened his eyes and said, "Did they get him or not?" He thought a man had shot him. His voice was strange, hoarse. I told him not to say anything, 'cause he was having trouble talking, and started to pick him up when suddenly I saw a sailor running towards me with his right hand in his pocket. I got scared, let go of Vladimir Ilyich and fell on top of him to protect his head. I rumbled him up a little, I'm afraid. I pointed my revolver at the sailor and shouted for him to stop, but he kept on running. Then I shouted, "I'm firing!" and the sailor turned away. Just then a woman jumped on me, grabbed my hand, crying, and shouted, "Don't shoot! It's Lenin! Don't shoot!" She thought I was the one who shot Vladimir Ilyich. Then the head of the trade union committee came running up and sorted everything out. I got up and helped Vladimir Ilyich to his feet. He absolutely did not want to have anyone carry him. He walked to the car, white as a sheet. Somebody said to take him to the hospital but I said the only place I would take him was the Kremlin. That's all. The woman was captured.

*Petrovsky.* Thank you, Comrade Gil. Go to Lubyanka and give your evidence to Peters.

*Exit Gil. Enter Kursky.*

*Kursky.* She's been interrogated twice. I brought the statements.

*Sverdlov.* Yes, yes, of course...

*Kursky (reading).* Here's the first statement. "I am Fanya Yefimovna Kaplan; I served a term under that name in Akatui. I have had the name since 1906. Today I shot Lenin. I shot him of my own accord. I don't remember how many times I fired. I won't say what revolver I used. I do not want to discuss details. I do not know the women who were talking to Lenin. I made the decision to shoot Lenin a long time ago. I didn't live in Moscow before, nor in Petrograd. I do not know the woman who was also wounded. I shot Lenin because I consider him a traitor to the revolution and think that his further existence would have undermined faith in socialism. I do not wish to explain how he would undermine faith in socialism. I consider myself a socialist. I do not presently belong to any party. I was arrested in 1906 as an anarchist. I do not regard myself as an anarchist any

more. I do not consider it necessary to say which social group I belong to now. I was exiled to Akatui for complicity in a bombing in Kiev." The interrogation was conducted by me, People's Commissar for Justice Kursky.

The second interrogation: "I am twenty-eight, stayed wherever I could find shelter, am originally from Volyn Gubernia, did penal servitude in Akatui, am an anarchist. I was captured near the entrance to the rally. I do not belong to any party. I shot Lenin because I think that if he lives, socialism will recede decades into the future. My attempt on his life was a personal act.' Fanya Kaplan refused to sign the statement. Chairman of the Moscow Revolutionary Tribunal Dyakonov" Addendum: "Kaplan asked that the record be corrected to show that she is not an anarchist but merely served a term in Akatui as an anarchist." That's all so far. The interrogations are continuing.

*Yenukidze.* But she's some kind of madwoman!

*Krestinsky.* She has a personality disorder at any rate.

*Sverdlov.* No, I get the sense she's not being entirely truthful...

*Kursky.* She gives the impression of being an extremely unremarkable, limited, almost hysterical person I would say... She acts bewildered, talks incoherently, swings between screaming fits and utter moroseness. She denies having any ties with the SRs. We still don't have a very clear general picture of the crime. Maybe there's some connection with Uritsky's assassination this morning. Still, we can't rule out the possibility that it was the act of a lone madwoman. There is some evidence that Vladimir Ilyich was being hunted down. Militants from the Savinkov<sup>8</sup> organisation have been lying in wait for Vladimir Ilyich at every rally. But that hasn't been verified yet. We still can't show that Kaplan was part of that organisation. New statements will be ready in about two hours.

*Chicherin.* What was the bombing she mentioned?

*Kursky.* An attempt to assassinate the Governor General of Kiev. Kaplan was a *gymnasium* pupil at the time, she was made the executer. After the bomb blew up she was supposed to finish him off if he was still alive. She was arrested in her apartment with a revolver in her hands. Any more questions? Then I'm off to Lubyanka.

*Sverdlov.* Good.

Exit *Kursky*.

*Girl (dictating).* BADAYEV, THE SMOLNY, PETROGRAD. COMRADE BADAYEV; STOP BEING CAPRICIOUS — YOU ARE NOT A YOUNG LADY...

*Lunacharsky (breaking the silence).* Without him ... we'll make so many silly mistakes...

*Girl.* ...YOU WERE NOT ASKED WHETHER YOU THOUGHT "ALL YOUR ACTIONS" WERE "UNDOUBTEDLY CORRECT" (THAT'S ABSURD), BUT WHETHER YOU HAD CARRIED OUT ALL OF MOSCOW'S INSTRUCTIONS. YOU DO NOT SAY A WORD ABOUT THAT!...

*Lunacharsky.* It can't be... It just can't be...

*Girl.* ...CONTINUE WORKING, YOUR RESIGNATION IS NOT ACCEPTED. IN THE FUTURE CARRY OUT ALL OF MOSCOW'S INSTRUCTIONS AND STOP ALL THIS UNBECOMING NONSENSE ABOUT "UNDER-HANDED PLOTTING". YOURS, LENIN.

*Lunacharsky.* The whole cause will be lost...

*Sverdlov (exploding).* Get hold of yourself, Anatoly Vasilyevich. Stop talking like that! Just now he told me, "Please, without whimpering. Our cause is true, but a split would be disastrous!" Get hold of yourself. The revolution's fate cannot ... should not depend on a single individual! That would be too tragic! When Sverdlov, Lunacharsky, Nogin, Krestinsky, all of us, even Lenin are gone the revolution will remain. The most terrible thing of all is to think otherwise. Please, Anatoly Vasilyevich, calm down. Right now we...

Enter *Kizas*.

*Kizas.* Yakov Mikhailovich, the doctors would like to speak with you.

*Krestinsky.* How is he?

*Kizas.* The same ... no better...

*Sverdlov* hurriedly buttons his jacket and leaves the conference room. He walks down the hall to Lenin's apartment where *Ulyanova* is seated at the table and *Krupskaya* is seated on a chair next to the door to Lenin's room. *Sverdlov* disappears inside.

*Girl (dictating).* TULA UYEZD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. PLEASE GIVE ME THE ANSWERS TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE:

FIRST, WAS THE TULA UYEZD PEASANT CONGRESS HELD? SECOND, WAS A PROPOSAL MADE (BY WHOM) TO SEND GREETINGS TO LENIN? THIRD, DID THE DELEGATES DECIDE IN FAVOUR OF SENDING A MESSAGE BUT AGAINST SENDING IT IN THE NAME OF PARTY MEMBERS? FOURTH, WAS THE CONGRESS DECLARED CLOSED AS A RESULT?...

*Kollontai.* Ilyich was being hunted down and we didn't lift a finger to prevent it.

*Girl.* ...IT IS VITAL THAT I RECEIVE AN ANSWER AT ONCE. I ABSOLUTELY INSIST OF BEING ANSWERED WITH THE UTMOST SPEED AND I AM MAKING THE UYEZD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE FOR SEEING THAT IT IS DONE. CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF PEOPLE'S COMMISSARS LENIN.

*Sverdlov* comes out of the room and goes over to *Krupskaya*.

*Sverdlov.* Nadezhda Konstantinovna...

*Krupskaya.* Please don't, Yakov Mikhailovich. I understand... Let's just sit and be silent.

Without a word *Sverdlov* sits down at the table.

*Zagorsky.* I called him at two. I said, "Vladimir Ilyich, the Bureau of the Moscow Committee has just voted against your speaking today." He laughed. "Who am I, a minister? Do you want to hide me away in a little box?" Then I read him excerpts from the Bureau's resolution. He said, "I oppose the resolution in principle, moreover, it was adopted in my absence." So I told him, "We're prepared to adopt it again in your presence." "Fine," he said, "I'll come after the meeting. I cannot refuse to attend, first of all, because I gave my word and, second, because I think it is right and essential to speak before the workers at this time." The rest is pure irony.

Everyone silent.

*Sverdlov (breaking his silence).* You know, *Zagorsky* and I hadn't turned fourteen when we brought the first leaflet to

the gymnasium... (*Catching Krupskaya's look.*) We went to school together. We were inseparable. Only then he was Volodya Lubotsky. Next we got hold of some weapons and hid them in the attic. Then came demonstrations, assemblies. The first arrest — two days. We were so proud of ourselves. Then came Vladimir Ilyich's *What Is to Be Done?* and it wasn't a game any more. We had a purpose... Zagorsky was tried in 1902, at 15, along with Zalomov. Gorky described it in *Mother*. He was sentenced to life in exile: he'd beaten up a policeman during a demonstration. I was imprisoned soon after that. I'd always wanted to meet Ilyich but never had a chance. Not until April last year. Just a year and a half...

Krupskaya is silent.

*Bonch-Bruevich enters the conference room.*

*Bonch-Bruevich (to Zagorsky).* A message for you from the Moscow Soviet. (*He hands it to Zagorsky.*) He's still in poor condition. Obukh's been located and will be here soon. Vladimir Ilyich keeps asking for something to drink. We need lemons. We couldn't find any in Moscow so we've sent a message to Petrograd asking the comrades to go around to the embassies. They probably have some.

*Chicherin.* That makes sense.

Exit Bonch-Bruevich.

*Sverdlov (addressing Krupskaya, explodes).* And now I have to tell everybody that the revolution cannot depend on a single individual, even on Ilyich, when I know perfectly well that it does! The comrades look at me and each time the question in their eyes is, what will happen if?... It's too horrible to even think about! He must live, he can't ... now! I say that and I can easily guess what he would say: "Comrade Sverdlov, do you remember the words Marx liked to quote so much in that regard? 'The great seem great to us because we are on our knees.' Let's get up, Yakov Mikhailovich..." That's the question, will we?

Krupskaya is silent.

*Yenukidze.* Comrades, I think that Vladimir Ilyich does not have the right to take such risks in the future. We need to pass a special resolution.



*Lunacharsky.* What kind?

*Chicherin.* About what?!

*Yenukidze.* About Comrade Lenin's lack of discipline and measures to ensure his safety!

*Stuchka.* He'd give bodyguards the slip. And so would any of us. Isn't that obvious?

*Yenukidze.* We'll issue a reprimand. The same rules for everybody. If I had flouted a decision of the Moscow Committee what kind of dressing down would he have given me? (*To Zagorsky.*) If you don't issue him a protest tomorrow I won't respect you any more!

*Nogin.* It isn't a question of discipline. He's shocked by the very idea of personal protection. Time after time he's said, "Now how can I go to meet workers with a bodyguard? After all, we represent worker rule. What will we become if we protect ourselves from the workers?" So it's a matter of principle and we need to think of sensible steps we can take to get out of this predicament.

*Yenukidze (exploding).* And what will we become if every madwoman, every psychopath, every agent of the Entente can take a potshot at Ilyich? Aren't Uritsky and Volodarsky enough?!

*Krestinsky.* That's demagoguery! What are you suggesting? That the Old Man not meet the people?

*Yenukidze.* You're the one suggesting that! I'm not!

*Pokrovsky.* Assassination is an occupational hazard for every political figure.

*Yenukidze.* Well? Are we supposed to accept that? Let's go then, let's put the whole Central Committee and the whole Council of People's Commissars where they can be shot at. Oh, what brave Bolsheviks! They're not afraid of anything!

*Petrovsky.* What about you, wouldn't you go?

*Yenukidze.* Certainly, but that's not the point.

*Lunacharsky.* What are you talking about, Avel? Will there be anyone to protect tomorrow?

*Zagorsky.* Comrades, the Moscow Committee and the Moscow Soviet have made a request. Spontaneous rallies have begun in every district of Moscow...

*Kollontai.* Where do we need to go?

*Zagorsky.* Let's divide up. Who'll go to Sokolniki? Krestinsky?

*Krestinsky.* All right.

*Zagorsky.* To Presnya?

To Lefortovo? Kollontai to Lefortovo. Milyutin to Gorodskoy. Call him at the Moscow Soviet and let him know.

*Petrovsky*. All right.

*Zagorsky (continuing)*. Chicherin and Semashko to Khamovniki. Who'll go to Michelson?

*Lunacharsky*. Allow me.

*Zagorsky*. Fine. Taganka? Pokrovsky and Podbelsky. Khodynka? Yenukidze and Avanesov. Rogozhsko-Simonsky?

*Petrovsky*. I'll go.

*Zagorsky*. Agreed. Zamoskvorechye? Nogin and Yelizarov. Basmanny District? Stuchka and Rudzutak. Trubnaya Square? Steklov, and take Osinsky with you. Cars are waiting below, at the entrance. Who doesn't have a weapon?

*Lunacharsky*. I don't.

*Zagorsky*. Take this. (*He takes a Browning from his pocket and hands it to Lunacharsky.*)

*Lunacharsky*. Perhaps...

*Zagorsky (firmly)*. No, no, you must take it. Let's go, Comrades.

One after another the *People's Commissars* leave. *Lunacharsky* stands with the Browning in his hand, uncertain what to do with it, but at last he sticks the gun in his briefcase and exits. Enter *Sverdlov*. He sits down at the table and begins to cry.

*Krupskaya* darns the bullet holes in Lenin's coat.

Offstage the noise of rallies grows and the voices of orators can clearly be heard.

*First orator (woman)*. Long enough has the scarlet blood of our comrades in the people's cause stained our banners! Long enough have we spared the butchers and those who inspire them! We shall kill the enemies by the tens and hundreds without mercy or pity! May thousands die! May they choke on their own blood! May the French Revolution be our model! For Comrade Lenin's blood, for Comrade Uritsky's murder, for the attempt on Comrade Podvoisky's life, for the unavenged blood of Volodarsky and Nakhimson, for the blood of thousands upon thousands of soldiers, workers and sailors — may the blood of the bourgeoisie and their servants be spilled! Long live Red Terror!

*Second Orator (man)*. Comrades! Neither words nor tears are of any use. Do not cry, comrades! It is time to act! Comrades, we demand that for each of our comrades, each of

our leaders treacherously killed or wounded the bourgeoisie and social-traitors pay with thousands of their lives! I propose the following resolution be adopted: first, that Vladimir Ilyich Lenin live; second, that our response to the treacherous, cowardly shot be merciless Red Terror. We demand the blood of the bourgeoisie!

CURTAIN

## PART TWO

*Girl (dictating).* THREE ADDRESSES: TO SYTIN, KOZLOV; TROTSKY, TSARITSYN; AND VOROSHILOV, TSARITSYN. WE HAVE BEEN RECEIVING DESPERATE TELEGRAMS FROM VOROSHILOV COMPLAINING THAT HE HAS NOT RECEIVED THE AMMUNITION HE HAS REPEATEDLY AND INSISTENTLY REQUESTED. SUGGEST YOU INVESTIGATE THE MATTER WITHOUT DELAY, TAKE EMERGENCY MEASURES TO RIGHT IT AND INFORM US WHAT YOU HAVE DONE. CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF PEOPLE'S COMMISSARS LENIN, CHAIRMAN OF THE ALL-RUSSIA CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE SVERDLOV.

*Sverdlov* is talking on the telephone in the conference room.

*Sverdlov.* Fine. If the British move large forces the railway bridges will have to be blown up... Yes, I understand. But if the British converge with the Czechs, you and I and the entire Revolutionary Military Council... Get hold of Kedrov, he knows what's going on. I'm at the Council of People's Commissars... Fine. (*He replaces the receiver and hands Kizas two messages.*) These are urgent, for Altvater and Chubar.

The telephone rings. *Sverdlov* picks it up.

*Sverdlov* here... I don't have time for that now, come see me tomorrow. (*Listens impatiently.*) No, no... (*Explodes.*) Listen once and for all and explain this to the whole newspaper staff: we don't need people to have faith in us, we need them

to understand what we're saying! Go to bed, you're tired. (*He throws down the receiver. To Kizas.*) Where's Yenukidze?

*Kizas.* He's coming.

The telephone rings. *Kizas* picks it up.

This is *Kizas*. *Yakov Mikhailovich*, it's Petrograd, Dzerzhinsky.

*Chicherin* and *Lunacharsky* enter the conference room. *Sverdlov* takes the receiver.

*Sverdlov.* Hello?... Yes, it's me... Still bad... Obukh, Weissbrot and Minz... Kursky and Peters... If he doesn't take a turn for the better by morning we'll summon all the members of the Central Committee to Moscow... I've already sent him one message to come back and now I'm getting ready to send another... We're holding on. What's the situation in Petrograd?... Fine... Come on back... We'll be waiting. (*He puts down the receiver.*)

*Kizas.* *Yakov Mikhailovich*, you're being called to the telegraph.

*Sverdlov* goes over to it.

The telephone in Lenin's apartment rings.

*Krupskaya* picks up the receiver.

*Krupskaya.* Hello?... Yes, it's me... Yes, I know you're having a meeting... Everyone's there?... Yes, I was told about it... No, I didn't forget... Comrades, the trouble is ... my husband's been shot... Could we postpone it until tomorrow? I'll be there tomorrow without fail... (*She puts the receiver down.*)

*Pokrovsky* enters the conference room, followed shortly by *Steklov*.

*Pokrovsky.* What happened at the rally?

*Lunacharsky.* I barely restrained them from taking the law into their own hands.

*Chicherin.* The same thing at Khamovniki.

Meanwhile *Sverdlov* is standing at the telegraph reading the tape. Beside him stands *Yenukidze*.

*Sverdlov* (*to the telegraph operator*). Say, "This is *Sverdlov*."



*Steklov (picking up the telephone)*. This is Steklov. Please connect me with the editorial office.

*Sverdlov (dictating)*. "Wired you an hour ago."

*Pokrovsky*. What happened at the rally?

*Steklov*. They're demanding the blood of the bourgeoisie.

*Sverdlov (dictating)*. "Ilyich has been wounded, unclear how seriously."

*Steklov (into the receiver)*. Write down this banner headline for tomorrow's paper.

*Sverdlov (dictating)*. "Come at once. Will pass on your request to the proper authorities. Measures will be taken." That's all.

*Telegraph operator*. Transmission over.

*Steklov (into the receiver)*. Ready? "Uritsky murdered, Lenin wounded". Period.

*Sverdlov (handing a note to Yenukidze)*. Please, find Altvater right away, Avel, give him this, tell him it's urgent and help him get the people he needs.

*Exit Yenukidze. Sverdlov goes to Lenin's apartment.*

*Steklov (dictating)*. "By the hand of hirelings, Russian and foreign capitalists want to behead the Russian revolution." Period.

*Weissbrot enters from the room and takes Sverdlov aside.*

*Weissbrot (anxiously)*. Yakov Mikhailovich...

*Steklov (continuing his dictation)*. "The proletariat shall respond by mercilessly punishing the murderers and doubling its efforts at the front." Period.

*Weissbrot*. Vladimir Ilyich came to just now and took advantage of our being alone...

*Steklov (dictating)*. "Workers, preserve utter calm and restraint!" Exclamation point.

*Sverdlov*. What happened?

*Weissbrot*. We had a very painful conversation.

*Steklov (dictating)*. "Take no personal actions." Period.

*Sverdlov*. Go on.

*Weissbrot*. He asked me, "Will the end come soon?" I told him he shouldn't even think of such a thing. Then he asked me, "Are you a Communist, a Bolshevik? Then keep in mind that you mustn't spare my feelings. There are more important

things at stake. I have to speak with Sverdlov, there are still a few small matters. You'll let me know?"

*Sverdlov.* What did you say?

*Steklov (dictating).* "Close ranks." Period.

*Weissbrot.* I promised. Then he raised himself up and asked, "Is it too early now?" I told him it was too early and that I would definitely let him know, but as you yourself realise...

*Steklov (dictating).* "Long live the wounded leader of the proletariat!" Exclamation point.

*Sverdlov.* He's right. He has to be told... We have an obligation to tell him.

*Steklov.* Good. I'm at the Council of People's Commissars. (*He replaces the receiver.*)

*Sverdlov.* But at the same time ... it's cruel... You haven't lost hope?

*Weissbrot.* Not yet, however...

*Sverdlov.* I understand.

*Girl (dictating).* RYAZAN GUBERNIA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. WHAT STEPS HAVE BEEN TAKEN WITH REGARD TO THE CONSIDERABLE GRAFT UNCOVERED BY THE STATE INSPECTORATE IN PUBLIC DINING HALLS? CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF PEOPLE'S COMMISSARS LENIN.

Enter *Petrovsky.*

Exit *Lunacharsky.*

*Petrovsky.* Yakov Mikhailovich, I was just at the Commissariat. We're inundated with telegrams. So is Dzerzhinsky's commission. The provinces are up in arms. They're asking for permission for mass executions and arrests.

*Sverdlov (brusquely).* We can't sanction that without the appropriate decree by the Council of People's Commissars, Georgy Ivanovich.

*Petrovsky.* I'm afraid they won't wait.

*Sverdlov.* Send a telegram right away to all the chairmen of the executive committees and the Cheka telling them they will answer personally, even to the extent... The blind fury of the masses is usually exploited with great success by the most reactionary elements. We don't need that.

*Girl (dictating).* EXTRAORDINARY WAR COMMISSAR VLADIMIROV, KOZLOV. I HAVE RECEIVED A COMPLAINT THAT YOU COMMANDEERED NINE

FIRST CLASS RAILWAY CARS INCLUDING A RESTAURANT CAR, KITCHEN CAR AND TWO SALOON CARS. WE FIND THAT EXCESSIVE, INORDINATE, IRRITATING TO THE WORKERS AND A HINDRANCE TO THE FUNCTIONING OF THE RAILWAYS. HOW MANY CARS ARE YOU ALLOWED BY ALL-RUSSIA CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REGULATIONS? CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF PEOPLE'S COMMISSARS LENIN.'

*Zagorsky bursts in.*

*Zagorsky. Yakov!*

*Sverdlov. What's happening in the city?*

*Zagorsky. The situation is serious. People are itching to take revenge. Red Square is packed with worker delegations. There haven't been any disorders yet. We got together a group of long-time party people and members of the underground. We want to despatch them to the factories. What do you think?*

*Sverdlov. Go ahead.*

*Exit Zagorsky. Sverdlov goes over to Krupskaya, who is sitting at the table with Ulyanova and Kollontai.*

*Krupskaya. ...That always worried him a great deal. He said that we had to re-examine all our theories in light of the latest developments — war, peace, our revolution, others. He told me he won't be able to finish that work. He explained that when you're constantly doing, theoretical work is terribly difficult. To think clearly he would have to move to the country. If there were only scholars abroad, in America, say, in Britain, Europe who would watch what we're doing, analyse it and share their observations with us. We need objective criticism! When a storm is raging, what needs a captain most of all is advice from intelligent, sympathetic observers who are safe far from the centre of the storm. But we aren't getting that kind of criticism from abroad. Instead there's ignorant horror in the West, caused by the difficulties we're experiencing. All the ignorant see are the enormous waves, the disciplined crew, one or another man overboard and that's all. We're much more aware of all that than our critics are. We need to know how to overcome these difficulties and reach the goal that is shared by all people who are searching for the meaning of life. We may*

have different ideas about how to reach the ultimate goal, but we completely agree on where we're headed. I think that's how it was. Maybe I've left something out...

*Ulyanova.* Before October he used to say that it was much more pleasant to make revolution than to write about it.

*Sverdlov.* Certainly, there's no contradiction there... *Nadezhda Konstantinovna*, if the doctors ask for me I'll be with the People's Commissars. Shall we go, *Alexandra Mikhailovna*?

*Sverdlov and Kollontai* head for the conference room.

*Telegraph operator (to the girl):* Many more?

*Girl.* Yes.

*Telegraph operator.* Let me just take a couple of puffs. (*He lights a cigarette.*) Who's going to take his place? There's no one of his stature.

*Girl.* A few days ago I stayed after a meeting to write up the minutes, and Vladimir Ilyich was talking to some American. The American asked him, "Who will be your successor?"

*Telegraph operator.* So what did he say?

*Girl.* He said he'd realised long ago that he couldn't be all-encompassing.

*Telegraph operator.* What happened next?

*Girl.* He asked me for a clean sheet of paper and started to draw. After they left I took a look. He'd drawn a big circle and divided it up into unequal sections, like this... (*She shows her sketch to him.*) See?

*Telegraph operator.* Of course.

*Girl.* He drew it and said, "I can cover this section ... and this one. I'll shade in the area they take up... But these I can't. At first I tried to do it all myself, but then gradually other people began to help me. Together we make up the all-encompassing Party Man. Only he can cover every part of this enormous whole..."

*Telegraph operator.* That's it?

*Girl.* That's it.

*Telegraph operator.* So who's his successor? I can't make heads or tails of it.

*Girl.* Neither can I.

*Telegraph operator.* A circle, you say?

*Girl.* A circle...

*Chicherin, Lunacharsky, Krestinsky and Pokrovsky are joined in the conference room by Petrovsky and Batulin. Sverdlov and Kollontai appear a bit later. One by one, the other People's Commissars return.*

*Petrovsky.* This is Comrade Batulin. He detained Kaplan. Please be seated. Tell us what happened, Comrade Batulin.

*Batulin.* Well, I'm the regiment commander's assistant. Batulin's my name. We're stationed not far away ... so, uh ... we went to hear him speak, too, you know... So, anyway, here's what happened... I left the building late. I was probably the last one out. I walked over to the coach and suddenly I heard three sharp clicks like. I thought it was an engine making noises. Then the crowd, that had been standing calmly like, scattered. Took off running in all directions. Then I saw Comrade Vladimir Ilyich by the coach. He was lying like this, face down on the ground. Wasn't moving. I'm a military man, you see, so I figured out straight away it was an assassination. I didn't see who'd fired the gun, but straight away I started shouting, "Grab Comrade Lenin's murderer!" and ran towards Serpukhovka like everybody else. Everybody was really scared what with the shots and the confusion and all. So I was running and shouting, running and shouting when suddenly I felt like I'd been struck. I turned around and there was this woman, by a tree. She seemed kind of funny, standing there and staring, with this briefcase in her hand. White as a sheet, with this hunted look. Staring. So, I went up to her.

*Pokrovsky.* Why?

*Batulin.* I don't know. She acted kind of funny. She just couldn't seem to catch her breath. Like she'd been running and then stopped.

*Petrovsky.* Stopped?

*Batulin.* I asked her how'd she gotten there and she said, "What's it to you?", in this quavering voice. I asked her again and she gave me the same answer: "What's it to you?" Then I grabbed her and searched her pockets and took away the briefcase and umbrella and asked her why she'd shot Comrade Lenin. But I just got the same answer: "What's it to you?" That's when I felt sure it was her. I held on tighter and just then some kids came running up, shouting that it was her...

*Nogin.* Comrades, are you saying that she started to run away and then stopped?



*Batulin.* That's right.

*Nogin.* Comrades, she must be an SR! Typical SR terrorist! Their code of honour forbids them from fleeing the scene of a terrorist act.

*Batulin.* Why?

*Kollontai.* To show that it's a political act, not a common crime.

*Pokrovsky.* They trampled on their principles long ago.

*Nogin.* The leaders did, but the rank and file have preserved them.

*Petrovsky.* Her name's starting to ring a bell, I think. When our group reached the central prison in Alexandrovsk I met Spiridonova and Bitsenko. There was some half-blind girl from Kiev with them. They were already quite at home there. They fed us and we exchanged news. It was so warm and friendly... Yes, it's her.

*Zagorsky.* What a monstrous historical paradox: we were tried together, transported together, slept four to a furcoat, were incarcerated together, escaped together, and all to wind up shooting one another.

*Sverdlov.* They all had a fantastic opportunity to criticise us and appeal to the masses and stay in the opposition. They had newspapers, they had organisations, they had everything a party in the opposition could dream of! But when they lost public support they started plotting and conspiring. Instead of being a loyal opposition they became conspirators, pawns in the hands of the White Guards and that kind of scum. That party's committed suicide and we're not responsible.

*Nogin.* Remember how we said before the revolution, "We'll tear down together, but not build..."

Enter *Kursky*.

*Kursky.* New statements.

*Zagorsky.* An SR?

*Kursky.* Just a minute, you'll find out.

*Batulin.* If you could ... tell Comrade Vladimir Ilyich that the people are worried. Tell him ... to get well as soon as he can. (*Exits.*)

*Kursky.* The third interrogation. "I arrived at the rally at about eight. I will not say who gave me the revolver. I did not have a train ticket. I was not in Tomilino. I did

not have a union membership card. I have not been employed for a long time. I will not say where I got the money. I have already said that my name has been Kaplan for eleven years. Conviction made me shoot. I did not tell any woman what meant "failure" for us. I have not heard anything about an organisation of terrorists linked with Savinkov. I do not want to talk about that. I do not know whether I am acquainted with anyone who's been arrested by the Cheka. I do not approve of the current government in the Ukraine. I do not wish to discuss my attitude towards the governments in Samara and Arkhangelsk." Interrogation conducted by Commissar for Justice Kursky. The fourth interrogation. "In 1906 I was arrested in Kiev for an attempt on the life of the Governor General. At that time I was imprisoned as an anarchist. A bomb explosion left me injured. I had the bomb for a terrorist act. I was brought before a court martial in Kiev and sentenced to lifetime penal servitude. I was incarcerated first in the prison in Maltsevo, then in Akatui. In Akatui I served time with Spiridonova, Bitsenko and Terentyeva. My views were shaped there, and I became an anarchist and social-revolutionary.

The People's Commissars exchange looks.

My views changed because I became an anarchist at a very young age. When the October Revolution occurred I was in a hospital in Kharkov. I disapproved of it. Then as now I supported the Constituent Assembly. Within the SR Party I lean more towards Chernov.<sup>10</sup> The Samara government has my full support, and I am in favour of an alliance with the allies against Germany. I shot Lenin." Interrogation conducted by Peters. That's all for now, comrades.

*Chicherin.* There'll be dancing in the streets in Paris and London tonight.

*Kursky.* I think the Council of People's Commissars will decide where it stands on Kaplan's fate.

*Stuchka* dashes into the conference room.

*Stuchka (upset).* An uprising in Livni! Kulaks! The Soviet and telegraph have been seized! Most of the town, too! The revolt's engulfed the uyezd! The party activists were torn limb from limb by a mob of shopkeepers and speculators. The internationalist squad lost two-thirds of its men. Today...

*Sverdlov (running to the telephone).* Get me Sklyansky! Quick!

*Stuchka.* The Red Army men captured were brutally tortured. They were flayed, their eyes were put out and then they were finished off. The chairman of the Cheka was torn from limb to limb. It all happened unexpectedly...

*Sverdlov.* This is Sverdlov. What's going on in Livni? Uh-huh... Uh-huh... Right... Fine... No, move the Orel railway regiment in and let it storm the town. Crush the rebellion. Declare the town and uyezd under seige. Scour the uyezd... We're all at the Council of People's Commissars. It's not clear yet. Obukh is with him now. *(Puts down the receiver.)* Steps have already been taken. *(To Stuchka.)* What happened at the rally?

*Stuchka.* They're itching to take revenge. They're waiting for us to take some action.

*Sverdlov.* Well, comrades, it looks like we'll have to declare military operations in the rear as well as at the front. I think that we'll adopt the All-Russia Central Executive Committee's resolution on turning the Soviet republic into an armed camp with all the attendant consequences. Our response to the assassination attempts and revolts should be a sharp increase in our operations at the fronts. On the other hand, telegrams are coming in from all sides demanding that we sanction mass executions and arrests. In other words, we are faced with the question of Red Terror in all its complexity and urgency. In our decrees we should present a militant plan of action without forgetting for a minute that Red Terror is not an act of revenge for our leaders, but an act of civil war. I'm going to try to draft the appropriate directive to be considered tomorrow or the day after by the Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars. It's a complicated matter and we should discuss it thoroughly. We can't put it off. I would ask all of you to stay and take part in this very important, albeit preliminary, discussion. *(He sits down at the table and bends over a sheet of paper. In the course of the scene it will be handed from one People's Commissar to the next.)*

*Krestinsky.* We got what we had coming to us. Ilyich was right when he said, "Where's the dictatorship? Show me! What we have is a mess, not a dictatorship. Just talk and one big mess!"

*Stuchka.* There's no need to exaggerate, we've done a lot...

*Pokrovsky.* What have we done? What? All we've done is turn the other cheek!

*Stuchka.* Exaggeration is the prerogative of the poet, not the politician!

*Petrovsky.* Exaggeration? I'll give you exaggeration: the decree abolishing the death penalty issued right after the revolution.

*Kollontai.* Remember how Ilyich reacted? How he laughed? Comrades, who was there then? It was the morning of the 26th. I remember his words exactly! "How can you accomplish revolution without firing squads? Do you really think we'll be able to deal with all our enemies if we consciously disarm ourselves beforehand? What other means of reprisal do we have? Imprisonment? Who's deterred by that during a civil war, when every side hopes to win?" We jumped on him, argued that the decree was essential, but he wouldn't budge. "A mistake, impermissible weakness, a pacifist delusion." But we couldn't persuade him, and he couldn't persuade us.

*Petrovsky.* And what happened next? We let General Krasnov go after he gave us his word that he wouldn't take up arms against us. How much workers' blood was spilled because of that? On January 1 a shot is taken at Lenin and everyone in the plot is arrested. Are they tried? No. First Ilyich himself meddling. Asks the investigators a dozen times to recheck long-established facts, then requests that the suspects be given more literature to read, then when they ask to be sent to the front he orders: "Close the case. Release. Send to the front."

*Nogin.* He realised that they were just confused boys.

*Petrovsky.* Then on January 7 anarchist sailors lynch Kokoshkin and Shingarev. We adopt a resolution protesting the lynching and send the remaining ministers and big capitalists abroad. In March we approve a motion by Uritsky prohibiting all executions, even for grave crimes. On May 1 we declare an amnesty and release people who are our enemies. Soon Volodarsky is assassinated.

*Pokrovsky.* The Petrograd workers wanted to unleash mass terror in reprisal, but the Petrograd Soviet held them back. Ilyich wrote Zinoviev then, "I strongly protest. We compromise ourselves, when we threaten mass terror, even in the resolutions the Soviets of Deputies pass, and then restrain the workers when push comes to shove."

*Petrovsky.* Even so, the Old Man was ignored again and



the Petrograd workers were held back. And what have we got to show for it today? A revolt in Yaroslavl, Nakhimson executed, reprisals against all the party activists in Yaroslavl, the secretaries of the local party cells murdered, Uritsky assassinated, Lenin shot and losses at the front in the thousands inflicted by those very same White Guards. So are we going to hold back again?

*Girl (dictating).* MONASTYRSKY, PERM. INSTRUCTIONS: TAKE FIRMER AND MORE ENERGETIC ACTION AGAINST THE WHITE GUARDS AND KULAKS. REPORT ON THE RESULTS MORE OFTEN AND IN GREATER DETAIL. LENIN.

*Kursky.* Strange: when we deal with the White Guards at the frontline no one doubts that we have to use arms. As soon as we encounter those same White Guards here, only in a different capacity — as members of a terrorist plot — we start having doubts...

*Pokrovsky.* Comrades, our attempt to avoid terror reminds me of someone who, say, takes it into his head to walk across the sea. You have to sail across a sea. Like it or not, we'll have to get in the boat.

*Lunacharsky (exploding).* Everyone here understands why we wanted to avoid terror! It's to our credit, Comrade Pokrovsky.

*Pokrovsky.* You shouldn't get worked up, Anatoly Vasilyevich. We would all be happy if we could avoid terror, but allow me to remind you that a revolution is not a change of governments. It is the overthrow of one class by another. It means crushing the resistance of the overthrown class. There is the logic of revolution, and no one has succeeded in escaping from its iron grip yet.

*Sverdlov.* We haven't tried to avoid terror. There is a right time for everything. Yesterday was too soon, and I'm afraid that tomorrow will be too late. Today it's absolutely essential.

*Chicherin.* What Arthur Arnould said about the Paris Commune — that it could never quite believe how low its enemies were — could certainly be applied to us.

*Yenukidze.* Maybe we'll believe now?

*Chicherin (facetiously).* Historical experience exists to be disregarded.

*Zagorsky.* But those who don't want to remember history's lessons usually have to learn them the hard way.

*Kursky.* Georgy Vasilyevich, you mentioned the Commu-



nards, who perished because of their gullibility and dilly-dallying. But what about the Jacobins, who knew a thing or two about crushing counter-revolution ruthlessly. We have something to learn from them. Remember, comrades, hanging back now could mean the end for us.

*Steklov.* In moments of anger it's especially good to take your time. The decision we're making is "archimportant", as Vladimir Ilyich would say...

*Petrovsky.* Archvital...

*Steklov.* I won't argue. That makes it all the more important that we discuss all the pros and cons. The Jacobin dictatorship shows...

*Pokrovsky.* I do not think that a discussion of the negative aspects of the Jacobin terror is appropriate now. It'll get us off the track.

*Lunacharsky.* I object! Saying, let's not talk about excesses, is absurd! Deprive ourselves of a tool as powerful and indispensable as the critical perspective on history? Opportunists regard all the negative aspects of the French Revolution as grounds for not making revolution at all. For us they're grounds for doing it better.

*Yenukidze.* Right!

*Sverdlov.* How can we even talk about forbidding something from being discussed or not? If we do that, we could wind up just remembering whatever is to our advantage at a given moment.

*Chicherin.* By keeping silent, Mikhail Nikolayevich, we'd be turning history into a prostitute who gave herself to the highest bidder. It's a slippery path. We'd fall, no doubt about it.

*Stuchka.* Cervantes suggested that historians who lied be strung up as counterfeiters.

*Pokrovsky.* I said that because the Russian intellectual is so soft-hearted. He doesn't have it in him to be resolute about revolutionary terror. If we start talking about excesses we'll give up altogether.

*Kollontai.* Why do you think we'll give up? Vladimir Ilyich never avoided unpleasant facts. Paradoxical as it may seem, he loved them, since you can only make the right decision if you're fully informed.

*Yenukidze.* What do you mean "never avoided"? What do you mean "loved"? Doesn't avoid! Loves!

*Obukh* enters from Lenin's bedroom, dressed in a white coat. He is worried. Krupskaya and Ulyanova rise as he approaches.

*Obukh.* I've decided to call another conference. We'll bring Rozanov in. He's had a lot of experience at the front. The wound is very serious. All we can count on is his constitution. His heart is sound. And he is healthy.

*Krupskaya.* Is there any hope?

*Obukh.* I would really like to be able to calm your fears... And I never lose hope.

*Ulyanova.* How is he?

*Obukh.* You know him... He no sooner comes round than he says, "Why all this fuss, why all these doctors?" At one point I lost my temper. His reply was, "There are real patients who need you", and that sort of thing. He's not supposed to talk. Right now he's unconscious.

*Krupskaya.* Vladimir Andreyevich...

*Obukh.* I understand... (*Exits.*)

*Ulyanova.* Nadya, we have to call Anya and Mitya... They'll never forgive us...

*Krupskaya.* Yes, yes, of course... I've already told them. (*She sits down.*)

*Krestinsky.* How's Nadezhda Konstantinovna doing?

*Nogin.* She's mending the bullet holes in his coat... There are more tears than stitches.

*Sverdlov (working on the document).* Georgy Vasilyevich, how will the West react to Red Terror?

*Chicherin.* Will they understand or not? It's a question of exact information.

*Steklov.* The Social-Democrats in the person of Kautsky...

*Sverdlov.* In the person of Kautsky it's clear. But what about in the person of Rosa Luxemburg?

*Chicherin.* That's harder. Again it's a question of information.

*Sverdlov.* Who will we lose in our country?

*Lunacharsky.* The intelligentsia.

*Zagorsky.* The intelligentsia who's with us will understand as long as we don't permit any excesses or outrages.

*Stuchka.* I'm afraid they won't understand.

*Sverdlov.* What will *Novaya Zhizn* say to us?

*Steklov.* Sukhanov and Gorky? That terror will only aggravate the Civil War.

*Yenukidze.* Why?

*Lunacharsky.* Bloodshed begets bloodshed. A chain reaction begins.

*Sverdlov.* All right, we'll concentrate on what's most important — saving the revolution. (*To Stuchka.*) How do...

*Tsyurupa enters the conference room.*

*Tsyurupa (waving a telegram).* Comrades, we can't print this telegram! It was sent to *Krasnaya Gazeta*! Just listen. *(He reads.)* "The assassination of Uritsky and the shooting of Lenin must not go unpunished. It is hard to fight, knowing that in the rear our best comrades are dying at the hands of bourgeois hirelings. We appeal to the workers of Moscow and Petrograd: 'Comrades, show the counterrevolutionaries no mercy! There is no need for courts or tribunals! Let the workers take revenge! Let the blood of the White Guard terrorists and the bourgeoisie flow! Be ruthless! Destroy the enemy! Smilga, Lashevich, Goloshchekin, Bela Kun'. Comrades, we can't put the question that way. Pseudo-revolutionary calls like this will lead to a bloodbath. I'm afraid of excesses... We do have courts...

*Pokrovsky.* How can we talk about courts now?

*Tsyurupa.* What do you mean?

*Pokrovsky.* The courts simply aren't capable of putting down a counter-revolutionary revolt. A civil war is going on. Don't you see, we can't take a prosecutor, lawyer and jury to Livni?

*Tsyurupa.* What's happening in Livni?

*Lunacharsky.* A revolt!

*Kursky.* Here's an example for you. Last night a stockpile of weapons was accidentally discovered in Voronezh. A revolt was obviously being planned. There were no clues and no concrete suspects. From the point of view of Roman law, the Chekists could not bring anyone to justice. But they knew how the plot in Yaroslavl ended — hundreds of workers drowned in the Volga. And the Chekists let themselves be guided by their class judicial sense: they arrested the local bourgeois leaders, and the plot was thwarted. What if they'd delayed, what if they'd been held back by the thought of due process? We'd have Voronezh on our hands as well as Livni.

*Nogin.* Didn't Vladimir Ilyich treat Gorky's bellyaching the same way? If a dozen or a hundred intellectuals who sympathise with the White Guards spend an extra week in jail as hostages and we thereby prevent new plots and the deaths of hundreds and thousands of workers and peasants, then that is the dictatorship of the proletariat, that is class struggle!

*Pokrovsky.* And as long as we've brought up the Jacobin

terror, which, I should say, had a complicated history, going from expediency to absurdity, the first step it took was absolutely correct, and that was to adapt the legal system to the needs of the class struggle.

*Stuchka.* But, Comrade Pokrovsky, revolutionary law doesn't mean no law whatsoever.

*Kursky.* Revolutionary law for us is the scrupulous observance of legal procedure in settling conflicts between workers or between peasants. And the observance of no procedure except one in the case of counter-revolutionaries.

*Stuchka.* Your position, like the one stated in this telegram, is too fuzzy. Red Terror has to be channelled in a specific, rigidly defined direction. Otherwise we'll run the risk of making the same mistakes the Jacobins did: the law on "preventive" arrests eventually became grounds for guillotining.

*Pokrovsky.* That's very true, there were excesses. But there was also what Engels called the great period, when there were people who possessed the courage of lawlessness, do you hear, the courage of lawlessness, who didn't back down for anything, people of great energy who saw to it that not one tradesman, not one profiteer, in short not one bourgeois showed his face!

*Sverdlov.* That's axiomatic. Whatever happened, Robespierre is still the quintessential revolutionary leader for us. But right now we're interested in what happened to them: how did the excesses come about and what were their consequences?

*Nogin.* And we have to calm down.

*Kollontai.* All right. Let's start with the basics. What is terror? It is an atmosphere of intense fear that threatens the individual with being made answerable for even the remotest associations. Right? Right. The counter-revolutionaries at work today aren't a bunch of White Guards, conspirators, spies and terrorists. The counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie has its social base in broader strata, where it's retained its influence. None of those strata are marked by civic courage and don't jump to take part in counter-revolutionary uprisings at the bourgeoisie's call. Right? Though they're counter-revolutionary at heart, they waver, they're afraid, they wait to see which way the wind is blowing. To my mind the aim of terror is to paralyse these strata, to deprive the counter-revolutionaries of their mass base. In other words, by

pursuing a policy of intimidation we can achieve our goal without mass bloodshed.

*Lunacharsky.* What's all the more painful, Alexandra Mikhailovna, is that the Jacobins realised all that and nevertheless replaced their policy of intimidation with a policy of extermination.

*Petrovsky.* The thing is, Anatoly Vasilyevich, that one can't exist without the other. A policy of extermination directed against patent counter-revolutionaries, a policy of intimidation directed against the politically unaware masses. One mustn't be substituted for the other.

*Lunacharsky.* I'm not the one who did the substituting. It was the Jacobins who started interpreting the policy of extermination so broadly! Remember the period before Robespierre's death? What would you call that?

*Tsyurupa.* The terror reached a climax, but the need for it had passed. The Jacobins became the victims of the very atmosphere of fear they'd created.

*Krestinsky.* The downfall of the Jacobin dictatorship was inevitable...

*Tsyurupa.* That's true. It had exhausted itself. Robespierre and his comrades would have perished anyway, but the question is how? If they had died at the hands of the king, royalists, or interventionists that would have been one thing. But they died at the hands of their fellow revolutionaries, the very people they had worked with so long and hard. That's the paradox. The terror turned into an avalanche.

*Lunacharsky.* And why? Because the apparatus of power was undergoing a complete transformation. Initially the organs of terror were elective and accountable to the revolutionary masses, but by the time Jacobinism culminated everything had changed. First of all, the Committee of Public Safety centralised the punitive apparatus from top to bottom, and the people in its employ, who had been elected and supervised by the masses, were replaced by appointed, salaried bureaucrats. The bodies of government and the organs of terror began to merge. And even though the organs of terror compliantly served the government, they didn't represent the people any more because they consisted solely of bureaucrats. This new terrorist bureaucracy gradually took over, and the terrorist decay of the petty bourgeois dictatorship began. The abuse of power was enormous, but no one, not Robespierre, not Saint-Just, could do



anything about it. They couldn't move against the bureaucracy because it had become their only mainstay. And under those conditions, even personal enmity between members of the government could spark a conflagration.

*Chicherin.* You're absolutely right, Anatoly Vasilyevich. Saint-Just himself said that the final period of terror was unnecessary and even detrimental. Here's what he said right before his death: "The revolution is stiff with cold, all its principles have been debilitated. All that remains are the *bonnets rouges*, concealing intrigue. Terror has dulled crime the way strong drink dulls the taste."

*Girl (dictating).* CHAIRMAN OF THE PETROGRAD SOVIET, THE SMOLNY, PETROGRAD. KRZHIZHANOVSKY INFORMS US THAT THE CHAIRMAN OF THE HOUSING COMMITTEE OF THE POOR AT ALEXANDROVSKY PROSPECT 15 ON THE PETROGRAD SIDE IS THREATENING TO SEARCH THE APARTMENT OF PROFESSOR HENRICH GRAFTIO AND CONFISCATE HIS PROPERTY. GRAFTIO IS A MERITORIOUS PROFESSOR, ONE OF US, AND MUST BE PROTECTED FROM THE ARBITRARY ACTIONS OF THE HOUSING COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN. PLEASE INFORM ME OF THE MEASURES YOU TAKE. CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF PEOPLE'S COMMISSARS LENIN.

*Zagorsky.* Wait just a minute! What do you mean by saying terror is unnecessary but exists? That's impossible! When the conditions for terror are absent, when there is no revolution, no civil war, when there is peace and prosperity and suddenly terror reigns — I'm sorry, but that's mass murder, not terror, and it serves individual, not class, interests.

*Sverdlov.* And whose interests does that individual pursue? I'm convinced that the blame for the reign of terror during the final period of Jacobinism lies almost entirely with the scared bourgeoisie, who were trying to prove how patriotic they were, with the bureaucracy, the lower middle classes who'd wet their pants in fright and with a bunch of scoundrels who were wheeling and dealing as usual during the Terror.

*Krestinsky.* Right, otherwise we're just parroting those liberals, who say that the only reason for the Terror was that Robespierre needed to get rid of dangerous rivals.

*Steklov.* But we're not. How can you deny that the social aspect of terror became secondary during the final period,

and terror was used by the leaders to save their skins and stay in power?

*Krestinsky.* But what brought that about? Not ambition on Robespierre's part. The logic of the struggle. Saint-Just said that circumstances were evidently leading to results that had never occurred to them. That's the key to the tragedy!

*Nogin.* Don't forget that the petty bourgeois is always inclined to go from one extreme to the other.

*Pokrovsky.* And don't discount the growing danger of counter-revolution that made it necessary to keep expanding the terror.

*Zagorsky.* He's right. The intensity of terror depends on the intensity of the class struggle. There's a direct correlation between the two.

*Lunacharsky.* For the Jacobins it was the other way round.

*Chicherin.* Whenever centralism and democracy aren't in balance a military dictator can come to power. Napoleon came along after both Directories had carried out the extreme centralisation of power initiated by the Jacobins and all that remained of democracy in the provinces was a façade that didn't fool anyone but babes.

*Steklov.* Don't forget that Napoleon's power base was the army, the punitive organs and the bureaucracy, in other words everything that had germinated under Jacobinism.

*Yenukidze.* Comrades, enough about the Jacobins! It's not a danger with us! It can't be!

*Kollontai.* Why?

*Yenukidze.* Because we are who we are! Who shouldn't I trust? Who should I suspect? You? You? Him? The very thought is blasphemous! I'm being emotional, you say? All right, I am, on the one hand. On the other, there's a difference between the petty-bourgeois revolution and the proletarian revolution, just like there's a difference between 18th century France and 20th century Russia! What about Marx's splendid words, that events of astounding similarity occurring under different historical conditions have completely different results?

*Kollontai.* What are you talking about, Avel? Haven't we heard the idea bandied about that it's time to turn terror into the instrument of our social policy; in other words, reduce all methods of governance to terror, the way the Jacobins did?

*Petrovsky.* It wasn't that way with the Jacobins.

*Lunacharsky.* Oh yes it was! Marx said that the Jacobins' views were a classic example of primitive, narrow political reasoning, incapable of finding a realistic cure for society's ills, despite an all-out exertion of political energy, political reasoning that could not discern any other explanation for those ills besides the counter-revolutionary mind-set of the revolution's enemies and made chopping off heads the main means of preserving itself. In other words, the guillotine became an all-purpose tool for solving economic problems.

*Krestinsky.* Well, you know, I think the French petty bourgeois can be excused for using the death penalty to try and get rid of profiteers.

*Lunacharsky.* Agreed, but I'm afraid that our provincial Robespierres and homegrown Dantons will also turn the bullet into the main means of solving all conflicts and problems.

*Sverdlov.* Of course they will if we don't caution them! It's a lot easier to call on the Cheka for help than it is to work with the masses, explaining, publicising, persuading, organising.

*Lunacharsky.* I'm also afraid that some comrades will put all the difficulties of the revolution down to counter-revolutionary plots and Entente agents. Think of the Left Socialist-Revolutionary revolt. The press immediately pointed the finger at Anglo-French spies. But it was obvious to all of us that the split was inevitable; it followed from the heterogeneity of the revolutionary forces.

*Steklov.* The press has nothing to do with this! You're nitpicking again. I think you were born to nitpick. If you met up with Achilles, all you'd see was his heel!

*Stuchka.* Somebody has to nitpick.

*Lunacharsky.* If I started going on at every crisis about agents of Pitt and Coblenz and never took a sober look at my own actions, then of course I'd appeal to emotions instead of reason and so consent to the fabrication of false accusations and filth of the like.

*Zagorsky.* By the way, Vladimir Ilyich proposed that we take a harder line on false reports and punish the culprits by death by firing squad. We should note that down.

*Yenukidze.* All right, fine, but where does expediency end and absurdity begin? Who can tell me that?

*Zagorsky (exploding).* We're sitting here, Avel, because we've got to tell you!

*Sverdlov (shouting).* Comrades! Comrades! Let's get this straight once and for all. We are not advocates or opponents of terror. We are Marxists. What I want to say was brilliantly put by Goethe, so allow me to remind you of his words: "They say the truth lies midway between two opposite points of view. Certainly not! What lies between them is a problem." Now then, the problem in this case is that terror is a weapon absolutely essential to our revolution, and it has certain positive and negative aspects. Our job is to make maximum use of the positive aspects of this weapon without allowing the negative aspects to develop. That is the only level we should be discussing this on.

*Nogin.* You're right, Yakov Mikhailovich, we need to cool down.

*Bonch-Bruyevich* enters the conference room. Everyone turns towards him.

*Bonch-Bruyevich.* Yakov Mikhailovich, Vladimir Ilyich was going to sign these papers... Still bad... Oxygen deprivation. Rozanov should be here any time now.

*Sverdlov.* Just a minute... (*He looks over the papers and signs them.*)

*Tsyurupa.* Did you get the lemons?

*Bonch-Bruyevich.* No. We just got a call from Petrograd. They went round to all the embassies. As soon as the embassy people found out who the lemons were for they refused to give any.

*Pokrovsky.* Bastards!

*Bonch-Bruyevich.* We're going to try through intermediaries. (*Exits.*)

*Lunacharsky.* Tell me it can't happen, Yakov Mikhailovich.

*Sverdlov.* Take it easy!

*Lunacharsky.* How will we manage without him?... We can't manage without him...

*Sverdlov.* Anatoly Vasilyevich... (*He squeezes Lunacharsky's heaving shoulders.*)

*Lunacharsky (whispers).* I won't be able to go on living...

*Sverdlov.* Come now, Anatoly Vasilyevich, don't talk like that...

*Lunacharsky.* You're the only one I've said that to... I ran into him the day before yesterday in the evening. He

was strolling in the courtyard with Alexei... As soon as he saw me he smiled... Our Anatoly Vasilyevich can do anything... And he made a bet with Alexei that I could give a very "scholarly" lecture then and there on the devil and aspects of devilry... And I did... How he laughed... How he laughed...

*Sverdlov.* He was in a really good mood this morning. I called him about Vasilyev — we've been getting complaints again that he doesn't have any regard for anybody else, oversteps his rights, doesn't understand the meaning of dialogue, only monologue. Vladimir Ilyich laughed and said, "There's nothing you and I can do, Yakov Mikhailovich. Oscar Wilde was right: 'To love oneself is the beginning of a life-long romance.'" We sent him a scathing message, even so.

The telephone rings in the conference room.

*Petrovsky (picking up the receiver).* This is Petrovsky... *(To the People's Commissars.)* Skirmishes in Livni. Shelling's begun. We've taken some pretty heavy losses. The uprising is being led by the Socialist Revolutionaries. General unrest in the uyezd. *(Into the receiver.)* Fine. *(Hangs up.)* They're asking that we hurry up with the decree, Yakov Mikhailovich. The thing is...

*Sverdlov.* All in good time, Grigory Ivanovich. We'll work as long as we need to. Now then, we've come to the most important question, comrades. It concerns the intensity of terror, which at first glance doesn't seem to bear any relation to the principle of terror itself, which is expedient and just. We have to keep in mind, though, that the intensity can have a significant effect on the principle, and even alter it, just as the means often alter the end. Roughly speaking, quantity can become quality. I want to warn all of us against putting a broad interpretation on terror, because if we do it might end up spilling over to our own people. If that happens the terror will change colour, and Red Terror will start performing the function of white terror, no matter what the aims of those who carry it out are. The same thing will happen if the principle of acting at the proper moment is violated.

*Tsyurupa.* What's the guarantee?

*Sverdlov.* Our clear recognition of these dangers, on the one hand, and a whole series of measures, on the other. Conducting the campaign of terror openly.



*Stuchka.* Making public the punitive organs' actions.

*Nogin.* Publishing the names of everyone who is arrested, taken hostage or condemned to death.

*Sverdlov.* Appointing people to the apparatus on a class basis.

*Zagorsky.* Constantly abiding by the main principle of Red Terror: it is committed by one class for that class against another.

*Sverdlov.* I stress: by one class.

*Pokrovsky.* We don't need professional punishers. We need workers from the factory who will ensure their class point of view.

*Sverdlov.* Any policy is influenced by the people who carry it out. The result here could be very different from what we intend, so I think we need to put our best people on the job, maybe even just those who were in the party before the revolution.

*Steklov.* But comrades, that means putting the flower of the party on the firing line! It's suicidal work! Who can endure it?

*Yenukidze.* That's what's so terrible, there's no other way. Like it or not, we have to wade through filth and gore, even though it breaks our hearts...

*Nogin.* You know, Yuri Mikhailovich, I've been watching Dzerzhinsky — what he has to do is torture, not work. It would be easier for him to sign his own death warrant than somebody else's, but he does it...

*Tsyurupa.* Those are the kind of people we need, not ones who find it easy...

*Sverdlov.* Comrades, in summing up this discussion, which has been very beneficial for all of us, I would like to draw your attention to one thing. Vladimir Ilyich has told us more than once that there are no fixed demarcation lines between bourgeois and proletarian revolution. Therefore, the question of excesses, that's interested us so much today, is of enormous significance, not just to us but to all, I would say. Excesses in red terror are a manifestation of petty bourgeois revolutionism, its triumph and, if you like, one of the greatest dangers we face. Because if we don't control the petty-bourgeois element in the depths of our revolution we may find ourselves regressing, like the French Revolution did. That is the fundamental question our discussion today has focused on.

*Lunacharsky.* Excesses! What else can we call what

happened in Tsaritsyn? When that barge loaded with people who'd been arrested, including hundreds who were innocent, was taken out into the middle of the Volga and sunk? Or the senseless carnage proposed in that telegram?

*Petrovsky.* I don't want to excuse what happened in Tsaritsyn, but... When those scoundrels have weapons in their hands, monumental propaganda is useless, Anatoly Vasilyevich. Any worker would sneer at the person who said you can win a gendarme over.

*Kollontai.* But the worker would also sneer at anyone who said that terror will be the norm.

*Lunacharsky.* Yes, I agree that there are moments in history when coercion is necessary. Even so, true socialism can only be established in the world through science and the broad education of working men and women, not with rifles and bayonets.

*Sverdlov.* Comrades, here are the outlines of the decree we're proposing. The Council of People's Commissars finds that under the present circumstances securing the rear by means of terror is a direct necessity; that in order to improve the working of the All-Russia Extraordinary Commission to Combat Counter-Revolution, Sabotage and Profiteering and to inject more organisation into it, as many responsible party members as possible should be assigned to it; that the Soviet Republic must be protected from class enemies by having them isolated in concentration camps. All persons implicated in White Guard organisations, plots and revolts will be subject to execution by firing squad; the names of all persons executed must be published along with the grounds for imposing that penalty on them. Any additions?

*Petrovsky.* I, for one, would like to see the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs publish an order recommending that the Soviets immediately arrest the top members of the bourgeoisie, the officer corps and the leaders of the Right Socialist Revolutionary Party and hold them hostage. If any attempt is made to go underground or create an uprising, mass executions by firing squad should be carried out unreservedly. Local gubernia executive committees and agencies should take steps to ascertain who is living under a false name for the purpose of concealment.

*Sverdlov.* Additions? No objections? It's important that I know the opinion of everyone here, so permit me to ask each of you in turn. Lunacharsky?

*Lunacharsky.* The hardest thing for a communist is to be brutal. How many times have we stood at the graves of our comrades and sworn to show no mercy in avenging their deaths? But still we didn't raise our hand. Now we can take no more. We have to raise our hand.

*Sverdlov.* Pokrovsky?

*Pokrovsky.* Absolutely.

*Sverdlov.* Stuchka?

*Stuchka.* In favour.

*Sverdlov.* Kollontai?

*Kollontai.* No objections.

*Sverdlov.* Kursky?

*Kursky.* Likewise.

*Sverdlov.* Tsyurupa?

*Tsyurupa.* Yes.

*Sverdlov.* Zagorsky?

*Zagorsky.* In favour.

*Sverdlov.* Steklov?

*Steklov.* No objections.

*Sverdlov.* Nogin?

*Nogin.* I don't have any objections.

*Sverdlov.* Krestinsky?

*Krestinsky.* No objections.

*Sverdlov.* Chicherin?

*Chicherin.* In favour.

*Sverdlov.* Yenukidze?

*Yenukidze.* Yes.

*Sverdlov.* Petrovsky?

*Petrovsky.* In favour.

*Sverdlov.* And Sverdlov is also in favour.

*Kollontai.* Comrades, we haven't decided where we stand on Kaplan.

*Sverdlov.* Alexandra Mikhailovna is right. (*He silently looks around at all present.*)

*Pokrovsky.* The firing squad.

*Kollontai.* When the investigation is concluded, the firing squad.

In the silence all that is heard is, "The firing squad, the firing squad" and "When the investigation is concluded, the firing squad."

*Sverdlov.* Everything's clear on that.

*Lunacharsky.* What time is it?

*Stuchka.* Three a.m.

*Kizas (appearing in the doorway).* Yakov Mikhailovich, the doctors would like to speak with you.

*Sverdlov.* Coming.

*Kollontai.* What's happening?

*Kizas.* No change (*Exits.*)

*Sverdlov* gathers up his papers and exits. The *People's Commissars* are silent.

*Girl (dictating).* NOVGOROD GUBERNIA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, COPY TO THE CHEKA: BULATOV WAS EVIDENTLY ARRESTED FOR COMPLAINING TO ME. LET ME WARN YOU THAT I WILL HAVE THE CHAIRMEN OF THE GUBERNIA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND CHEKA AS WELL AS THE MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ARRESTED FOR THIS AND SEE TO IT THAT THEY ARE PUT BEFORE A FIRING SQUAD. WHY WASN'T MY INQUIRY ANSWERED IMMEDIATELY? CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF PEOPLE'S COMMISSARS LENIN.

*Sverdlov* enters the apartment. *Krupskaya* comes towards him.

*Krupskaya.* When Rozanov started examining him he kept trying to say something but then he lost consciousness.

*Velichkina* enters carrying oxygen bags and goes into the next room.  
Enter *Ulyanova* from the kitchen.

*Telegraph operator.* Hold on, hold on. Take this down. It's from Petrograd. (*He dictates as the ticker tape emerges.*) "Lenin, the Kremlin, Moscow: Terribly saddened, worried, sincerely wish you a speedy recovery, bear up. Gorky and Maria Andreyeva".

*Ulyanova.* I found this in his pocket, Yakov Mikhailovich. (*She holds out a note to Sverdlov.*)

*Sverdlov (reads the note, a smile at the corners of his mouth):* Uh-huh ... uh-huh...

*Ulyanova.* Anything important?

*Sverdlov.* Yes, very. This is for Tsyurupa and his "24 kilo policy". We discussed the question and came to the same decision Vladimir Ilyich proposes.

In the conference room the *People's Commissars* have settled down for the night. Some are lying on chairs, others have spread newspapers on the floor, still others are seated on the tables and

windowsills. No one is asleep. The atmosphere is tense. It is very quiet. Now and then someone says a few words, as though thinking aloud.

*Kollontai (continuing).* ...He and I had a strange conversation not that long ago, in January. I stopped by his study. It was dark. I saw his familiar silhouette at the window. He had his hands in his pockets, he was rocking on his feet, his head was thrown back and he was looking at the stars. I was so surprised I froze. It was very quiet, and I decided to tiptoe away. But he saw my reflection in the window and without turning he said, "Stars ... what stars are out tonight. It must have got colder." Then he turned and asked, "Do you ever gaze at a starry sky?" I said only when I'd been on the ocean or in the country. At first he was surprised, "On the ocean?" But then he remembered. He said, "Oh, that's right, you've been to America. When I was a boy I knew all the constellations. I'm starting to forget them..." And then he went right over to business.

Enter *Obukh*, *Weissbrot* and *Vinokurov* from the room where Lenin is.

*Weissbrot.* Yakov Mikhailovich, we've asked Dr. *Obukh* to give you an objective picture of the situation.

*Sverdlov (glancing at Krupskaya).* Here?

*Krupskaya.* I want to know the truth, too. Don't worry, Doctor, we'll find the strength to bear up.

*Ulyanova.* Please.

*Obukh.* His condition is very serious. Extremely serious. Due to the perforation of the upper lung, there's been hemorrhaging in the pleura and the heart has been sharply displaced to the right. The pulse indicates shock. So we're concentrating on dealing with the shock for now rather than the broken arm. The second bullet travelled from left to right through the neck between the spinal cord and the throat. If that bullet had deviated by a fraction of a millimeter Vladimir Ilyich wouldn't be with us now. Based on our professional experience, we have come to the following conclusion: if the patient comes out of shock, any immediate danger is past. A different danger remains, though — that's the danger of infection from the bullet.

*Weissbrot.* We are also concerned about the pleural region and the wound the bullet made in the neck.



*Obukh.* We've decided on the following course of action: the patient is to be given complete rest. We will concentrate exclusively on his cardiac functions. The arm will have to be forgotten for the time being, aside from putting a light bandage on it to keep it immobile so the bits of broken bone will not cause the patient any unnecessary pain whenever he makes any slight movements.

*Vinokurov.* We've decided to ask Nikolai Mamonov to keep an eye on the pleural region. He's an outstanding specialist.

*Obukh.* That's about all, in general terms, of course. Any questions?

*Krupskaya.* Will he live?

*Vinokurov.* We'll do everything we can, Nadezhda Konstantinovna.

*Sverdlov.* So now it all comes down to his heart — whether it will bear up or not?

*Obukh.* Yes. There's almost nothing we can do.

*Sverdlov.* I see. We have to let the people and the world know the bitter truth. So we need a medical bulletin, and as soon as possible. If I understood you correctly, the outcome isn't clear yet. But that has to be phrased in such a way that hope remains.

*Weissbrot.* We've already drafted one.

*Sverdlov.* Give it to Bonch-Bruyevich. Who'll be taking the night shift?

*Weissbrot.* Dr. Obukh and I.

*Sverdlov.* Don't hesitate to call on us if there's any need... All the People's Commissars are here; none of them could go home...

*Obukh.* We'll let you know if we need you.

*The doctors exit.*

*Petrovsky (to Zagorsky).* Do you remember exile? The tiny shack, the taiga, the constable's derision, the hunger... And it was all easier...

*Zagorsky.* Of course it was...

*Petrovsky.* It's a difficult science, revolution... Profound, complex... I wonder if we'll stay the same once we win?

*Zagorsky.* Of course we will... But we'll get one heck of a tempering.

*Petrovsky.* That's true. Still, we'll have to keep our eyes open.

Zagorsky. The Old Man knew how to do that. He was always the first to shout, "Fire!"

Petrovsky. Yes, he knew what our mistakes would cost us.

Zagorsky. When I think that he could die, our lives all seem meaningless.

Sverdlov (to Krupskaya). We're all huddling together instinctively ... like children do ... when something bad happens.

*Bonch-Bruyevich goes over to the telegraph operator.*

*Bonch-Bruyevich.* This is urgent.

*Telegraph operator.* Fine. A telegram from Petrograd. How is he?

*Bonch-Bruyevich.* Bad. (*Goes into the apartment.*)

*Girl (dictating).* OFFICIAL BULLETIN. MEDICAL EXAMINATION HAS REVEALED TWO BLIND GUN-SHOT WOUNDS...

*Bonch-Bruyevich (to Sverdlov).* A telegram from Gorky.

*Sverdlov (softly, in amazement).* From Gorky?

*Girl.* ...ONE BULLET ENTERED BELOW THE LEFT SHOULDER BLADE, INJURED THE UPPER LUNG, CAUSING HAEMORRHAGING IN THE PLEURA, AND LODGED IN THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE NECK ABOVE THE RIGHT CLAVICLE...

*Sverdlov (reading).* Well, well... A year and a half of furious opposition, a year and a half spent tearing Ilyich and all of us to pieces... All ties severed... And now... I guess blood has to be shed to get a person to think...

*Girl.* ...THE SECOND BULLET PENETRATED THE LEFT SHOULDER, SHATTERED THE BONE AND LODGED UNDER THE SKIN IN THE LEFT SHOULDER...

*Bonch-Bruyevich.* Vladimir Ilyich will be happy.

*Sverdlov.* No, no, it will excite him. He cares very deeply for Gorky. We mustn't show it to him now.

*Girl.* ...THERE ARE SIGNS OF INTERNAL BLEEDING. HE HAS A PULSE OF 104. HIS CONDITION IS SERIOUS.

*Sverdlov.* When he gets better.

*Krupskaya.* But will he?

*Sverdlov is silent.*

*Chicherin.* At the time of the Brest negotiations almost everybody was lined up against him. He wouldn't budge. "The mood of a class is one thing, its basic interests are another — they may not always coincide. I'm thinking of interests..." He stood his ground and won us over.

*Krestinsky.* I remember it as if it were yesterday: he ran into the crucial meeting like a lion. Paced the room as if it were a cage. He was ready to steamroller everybody. Bukharin took refuge in a corner and we all got quiet. He was so angry the blood had all drained from his face and he couldn't put his hands in his pockets they were trembling so much. We still wouldn't consent to peace, some kind of resolutions were proposed... He blew up. "I'm resigning from the Central Committee! Enough of these games! I won't tolerate another second of this!" I can still hear him: "Not another second!"

*Nogin.* So temperamental. Always took things to heart so. And often suffered terribly. Especially during splits. When he had to break with friends...

*Yenukidze.* So many scars...

*Petrovsky.* What about the Malinovsky affair? He sat for a whole hour behind the paper where the police archives were printed and when he finally put it down his eyes were red...

*Zagorsky.* If you think about it, we never shielded him.

*Lunacharsky.* All the crockery we broke over the bombardment of the Kremlin... I didn't understand him and he didn't understand me. I told him a lot of hurtful things that didn't have to be said. He and I never followed parliamentary procedure when we argued... Someone told me that when he was given my letter of resignation something inside him seemed to snap...

*Velichkina* enters from the next room carrying empty oxygen bags. She leaves these and takes new ones.

*Sverdlov.* Allow me... I'll sit with him ... help you...

*Velichkina.* That's very kind of you, Yakov Mikhailovich, but... (*She falls silent.*) Come on...

*Sverdlov* takes the oxygen bags and exits with *Velichkina* to the room where Lenin is.

*Krestinsky.* In 1912, when *Pravda* got underway, he deluged us with articles from Cracow, where he was at the time.

We used to blue pencil them mercilessly and we only printed some. All of us thought that since we were here we had a better grasp of the situation, we knew what articles were needed and how they should be written... Well, in one letter he blew up. "This isn't the main thing, but you don't seem to be able to understand that I live on what I earn from the paper. And if you keep throwing everything in the wastebasket, I'll croak in this hole..."

Silence falls. Suddenly *Sverdlov* dashes out of the room where Lenin is lying. He runs towards the conference room.

*Sverdlov. Comrades! Comrades!*

All hurriedly rise and look towards the door in horror.  
*Sverdlov* bursts in.

*Sverdlov. The doctors say... The crisis is past... He said... He himself said... WE'RE GOING TO MAKE IT!*

There is a moment of silence, then pandemonium breaks loose. All rush over to *Sverdlov*, talk and shout, but nothing is intelligible, hug and congratulate each other. Kollontai cries and laughs. Suddenly voices rise from the group surrounding *Sverdlov*, singing:

*"Arise, ye starvelings from your slumbers..."*

And now happy, transformed, with a sense of oneness, they sing their anthem in a whisper:

*"Then, comrades, come rally,  
The last fight let us face,  
The Internationale  
Unites the human race."*

CURTAIN

1966

# The Brest Peace



## DRAMA IN TWO PARTS

*Lenin was never so great as in moments of danger.*

*From the January 22, 1924 statement  
of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks)  
Central Committee, "To The Party,  
To All Working People"*



## THE CHARACTERS OF THE PLAY

CHORUS of workers, peasants, soldiers, ordinary citizens and political activists — in short Russia in the first year of the Revolution.

They include:

Vladimir Ilyich LENIN, "Volodya", "Ilyich"

Yakov Mikhailovich SVERDLOV

Iosif Vissarionovich STALIN, "Koba"

Nikolai Ivanovich BUKHARIN, "Kolya"

Lev Davidovich TROTSKY

Felix Edmundovich DZERZHINSKY

Georgy Ippolitovich LOMOV

Alexandra Mikhailovna KOLLONTAI

Grigory Yevseyevich ZINOVIEV

Moisei Solomonovich URITSKY

Nadezhda Konstantinovna KRUPSKAYA, "Nadya"

Inessa Fyodorovna ARMAND

Nadezhda Mikhailovna LUKINA, "Nadya"

Maxim GORKY

Alexander BLOK

SIDORENKO

SUKHANOV

STROYEV

Raymond ROBINS

SOLDIER FROM BREST

GENTLEMAN IN TAILS

POET

WIDOW

LATVIAN

ORATOR

TELEGRAPH OPERATORS

## PART ONE

The scene is the Volkovo Cemetery in Petrograd on December 31, 1917. Snow is falling on a group of mourners. Red banners adorned with black crepe are held at a slant. Above the band, the weeping of the *Widow* can be heard. Members of the *Chorus*, including *Lenin*, *Dzerzhinsky*, *Bukharin* and *Stalin*, bareheaded, stand around the grave. An orator steps forward.

*Orator (voice breaking)*. A criminal's bullet has cut short the life of our comrade. The newspapers are filled with news of Brest-Litovsk. They say the hour when a just, democratic peace will be signed is close at hand! Millions of working people will ram the bayonets of their rifles into the ground, pick up the hammer and sickle and head straight for the Promised Land — socialism! You, Stepan, will not be among us, though.

A *woman* sobs and is comforted.

We will never forget your brief, but distinguished life, your courage in the days of July when you helped hide the leaders of the proletariat. We will not forget your contribution to the victory of the revolution. Adieu, friend, may the earth make you a soft bed. We bid you our last farewell...

It is time for the final parting. The widow rises and looks around at the assembled mourners. Suddenly she gives a heartrending cry that splits the air.

*Widow*. So you came! You showed up, after all! Well, he's not at your beck and call any more! He's mine now, all mine! The promises you made! The rosy pictures you painted! "There'll be bread, the killing will stop..." In the next world, right? Like priests, right? Big talkers! Liars! Oh lord, why

me? (*She sobs.*) Have you no shame? Have you no conscience? Who'll put bread on the table for me and my kids? You've taken everything... Everything! Take it all, here, take my son too, take him, take him! (*She flings the boy standing next to her at the feet of the mourners.*) I curse you all!

Someone motions to the band and music drowns out her words. A woman weeps. The coffin is lowered into the grave. The band plays its final notes. The weeping widow is led away. The other mourners slowly begin to disperse. Lenin, Dzerzhinsky, Bukharin and Stalin move down stage.

*Dzerzhinsky (speaking with a pleasant Polish accent).* It's just nerves, yes.

*Stalin.* Some orator! Why give an eulogy that allows a woman to lose her head like that?

*Bukharin.* We have to be understanding.

*Lenin (after a pause).* We have to pay our debts, that's the thing. We always have to pay our debts. (*To the others.*) Don't wait for me. Mama's grave isn't far away and I haven't visited it in a long time. I think I'll sweep away the show. Then I'll go straight to the direct line.

*Dzerzhinsky.* The Council meets at nine, and at midnight we'll see the New Year in, yes.

*Lenin (jokingly):* I'll make it to one or the other. (*He exits.*)

Volkovo Cemetery disappears leaving the front of the stage lit — here the central events of the first post-revolutionary months will be played out. The Chorus is seated on simple boards, arranged in a semi-circle. Now these boards are benches, later... On second thought, we cannot foresee all the ways they may be used, so we will leave that to the director. To the left and right of the portal Yuz telegraphs and operators appear. *Dzerzhinsky, Stalin* and *Bukharin* take their places in the Chorus. All is ready. There is charged silence. Throughout the play the Chorus will watch the action intently, just as Russia, rocked to its foundations, and the whole world watched what was happening in Petrograd and Brest-Litovsk, where in early 1918 the fate of the revolution was decided. There is the sharp sound of a string breaking. *Lenin* strides across the stage to the *telegraph operator* seated stage left. They shake hands.

*Lenin (dictating).* To all organisations of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (Bolsheviks), all Soviets, regimental and army committees: The Decree on Peace, approved by the Second Congress of Soviets, showed the bel-

ligerents that a way out of the war was possible by concluding a democratic peace without annexations or indemnities. The Anglo-French and American bourgeoisie did not accept our proposals and refused to even talk about a general peace. Therefore, we were compelled to enter into separate negotiations with Germany, meanwhile leaving the doors to the negotiations open to the members of the Entente. Germany, which is winning on the Eastern front and losing on the Western, acceded to the principles of a democratic peace — without annexations or indemnities — on the sole condition that the Entente powers recognise these principles. However, on December 27, having definitely realised that the Entente was not joining the negotiations, the German delegation discarded all talk of a democratic peace and began addressing us in the tones of a victor. We were presented with the following categorical demands: recognise the German seizure of Poland, Lithuania and parts of Byelorussia; pull our troops out of Estonia and Latvia; withdraw from the Ukraine; and pay Germany three hundred million in indemnities. Otherwise the war would continue. We request that you discuss the situation, solicit the opinion of the masses, make your proposals and communicate them to us. Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars Ulyanov-Lenin. (*To the telegraph operator.*) Thank you.

*Lenin takes his place in the Chorus.*

*Maxim Gorky rises.*

*Gorky.* I'm an old Russian writer. My name is Maxim Gorky. Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to say... Were the leaders in the Smolny to reject this shameful peace they would receive the support of all democracy. However, that is not to be expected. They will give Russia to the Germans to plunder, so they can hold on to power and engage in that popular activity themselves.

*Alexander Blok rises abruptly from his seat in the Chorus.*

For one of the most notorious and warmly applauded slogans of our novel revolution is "Steal Back What Was Stolen!"<sup>1</sup>. And the stealing is done marvellously, with such finesse! History will no doubt quiver with emotion when it tells of how Russia robbed herself. Churches, palaces, cannons, and rifles, are being robbed and sold. It is altogether novel and we can

be proud: nothing of the kind has ever happened, not even during the era of the French Revolution.

*Blok (passionately)*. My name is Alexander Blok. When the people take back what was stolen from them over the ages, I am not troubled! When voices all around cry out, "Civilisation is perishing!" I laugh. Why are the peasants ripping up the old church? Because for the past hundred years a fat, hiccuping priest has taken bribes and sold vodka there. Why do they defile the mansions so dear to our hearts? Because peasant girls were raped and flogged there. Do you think that revolution is an idyll? That creation doesn't ever destroy anything in its path? That the age-old feud between the highborn and the lowborn will be resolved painlessly or bloodlessly?

*Gorky (sarcastically)*. Did we fight to bring down the autocracy of cheats and scoundrels so that an autocracy of barbarians could take its place?

The stage becomes Lenin's study in the Smolny. Those who will be taking part in the meeting of the Council of People's Commissars leave their places in the Chorus and come downstage to the study, listening all the while to the debate between Gorky and Blok, who do not address each other directly.

*Blok*. There! There! What malicious delight our intelligentsia took in piling dry kindling under the fallen trees that had grown damp in the snow and rain, and now, when they have suddenly ignited and the flames have risen to the sky, the intelligentsia is scurrying about, screaming, "Fire! Fire!"

*Gorky*. The derogatory attitude towards the intelligentsia we often observe these days is, in fact, an "intellectual" attitude. It could not have been produced by the peasant, who knows the intellectual solely in the person of the altruistic district physician or the rural teacher. Nor could it have been produced by the worker, who owes his political education to the intellectual. This attitude is fallacious and harmful, to say nothing of the fact that it destroys the intelligentsia's respect for itself and the historical and cultural work it has done. The intelligentsia is the cart horse of history, ladies and gentlemen...

*Blok*. I am convinced that the sacred duty of our intelligentsia today is to listen to the music of the revolution, that has the air vibrating, not to look for shrillness and false notes amidst the majestic sound of the orchestra!



*Gorky (gloomily).* Sooner or later, though, we will have to take off our rose-colored glasses and see what is actually happening.

*Blok.* What I see is that our intelligentsia simply cannot discern the greatness of the revolution beyond its grimaces, of which there have been very few, far fewer than there might have been. That is lamentable! (*To the audience.*) I want us to see its greatness.

Blok and Gorky sit down.

*Stalin.* In my opinion, Gorky has simply become an anachronism. Oh, well, it's his choice. The revolution is incapable of pitying or burying its dead.

*Bukharin.* Watch what you say, Koba.<sup>2</sup> We have to fight for Gorky! If we think that way, I'm sorry, but we could wind up throwing away some of our very best.

*Stalin.* Gorky—our very best! If we hold on to power there'll be others. We have a saying in Georgia: if you don't have a dog, make the cat bark.

*Bukharin.* Hmmm... Wouldn't it be better to get a dog?

*Stalin.* I reject your spinelessness on principle, Nikolai. We have to give that old proletarian bard up for lost and not delude ourselves on any account. Speaking of which, that Blok of yours could have been more scathing.

*Bukharin.* Think of what you're saying! Do you realise the significance of those words coming from the author of *The Unknown Woman*?

*Sverdlov.* I got a magnificent edition of Blok the day before yesterday. Music in verse!

*Stalin.* Why didn't I? May I have a look at yours, Yakov Mikhailovich?

*Bukharin.* Let him have it, Yakov. Life's unbearable for Koba if someone has something he doesn't. He can't stand it.

*Stalin.* I want to know everything I can. Yakov Mikhailovich can testify that there wasn't any time for cultural activities in exile in Turukhansk.

*Bukharin.* You should have read that in the *gymnasium*.

*Stalin (smiling and shrugging his shoulders).* I didn't go to the *gymnasium*. And during seminary and afterwards I chose Marx over Blok. It wasn't so annoying to serve time for reading Marx. There are the classically educated and the self-educated. I definitely belong to the second category.

*Kollontai (entering from the wings).* I'm not late, am I? Listen everybody, what a marvellous evening — they're waltzing and polkaing in the assembly hall, everybody's happy and excited... I haven't seen the Smolny like this in so long. Not since the 26 of October, I think. How fast time flies! We've been in existence for 68 days now. Congratulations!

*Bukharin.* Alexandra Mikhailovna, don't interrupt. Koba and I are debating the advantages of a seminary education over the *gymnasium*. Speaking of the *gymnasium*, at nine o'clock one morning there was a knock on my door. In walked a gentleman in his 70s. The face was familiar but I couldn't place it. "Are you Bukharin, the editor of the Bolshevik paper *Pravda*?" he asked. "I am," I said. "I read your paper twice and have a question to ask. Aren't you the Bukharin who attended *Gymnasium No. 1* in Moscow?" "I am," I said. "In that case, I understand why your paper and your whole criminal gang is leading Russia to wreck and ruin: the seeds were already there when you were in the seventh grade." My jaw dropped — it was the headmaster of my old *gymnasium*, alive and kicking!

*Stalin.* What did you get up to when you were in the seventh grade?

*Bukharin.* Threw a political leaflet into the staff room. He called an assembly, put me up in front of the whole school and finished his harangue with the words, "Don't let me see you set foot in here again!" So I stood on my hands and walked out of the hall. All the teachers were struck dumb but he wasn't a bit fazed.

*Stalin.* Tsk-tsk-tsk, such a fine start and such an ignominious end — why couldn't you come up with anything to say to your old headmaster?

*Bukharin.* I lost my head.

*Stalin (winking to the others).* That's because you can't walk on your hands any more. That's a fact, and facts are stubborn things.

*Bukharin.* Would you like to bet?

*Stalin.* Fine. You won't be able to take two steps. But where?

*Bukharin.* Right here and right now.

*Kollontai (laughing).* Comrades, don't be silly. You're members of the government. Koba, don't bait him, take him at his word.

*Stalin.* Certainly not. As Bukharin says, I'm jealous of anyone who knows or can do more. I want to learn, and all I

need now is to learn to walk on my hands and my revolutionary education will be complete.

*Bukharin.* If you lose, you won't pay up. Oh, all right, Alexandra Mikhailovna will be our witness.

*Kollontai.* Here comes Vladimir Ilyich.

*Bukharin.* Off we go. *(He stands on his hands and goes off into the wings accompanied by Stalin.)*

*Lenin (stepping down from his place in the Chorus).* They're waltzing in the assembly hall. And at the front, too, can you imagine. I just got a report from Dvinsk that our soldiers are fraternising with the Germans and waltzing in the neutral zone. The first waltzes of '18.

*Bukharin and Stalin return.*

*Kollontai.* Who won?

*Stalin.* We're not telling. Let the historians say.

*Lenin.* They'll get it wrong anyway.

*Dzerzhinsky (from the wings).* Happy New Year, dear Comrades! And congratulations on the 69th day of our existence. The Paris Commune didn't last much longer: just two days, yes.

*Lenin (smiling).* Dzerzhinsky's counting... I must admit I am too, though.

*Sverdlov (at the telephone).* Comrades, the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries' Central Committee is in special session. They're discussing the German demands. It's taking them longer than they thought it would, so they say they humbly beg our pardon and could we postpone the meeting of the government until tomorrow?

*Lenin.* Fine, especially since the New Year is nearly here.

*Bukharin (looking at his watch).* That's right, there are just a few minutes to go.

*Lenin.* Well, comrades...

All move towards him.

Before I wish you all a Happy New Year, I'd like to say that I hope we'll all make a lot fewer blunders in the coming year than we did in this one.

Animation among the People's Commissars.

That's number one... Number two... *(He is silent a moment.)* I had a very interesting, well, let's say, conversation today.

It's been on my mind ever since. A woman accused us of not keeping our promises or paying our debts. I must say it somewhat depressed me. That's where ties break down, after all. We can lose everything except the people's trust. The people's trust is, you could say, the main capital our party has. Kiev, Donbas, Riga — we can get all that back, but the people's trust... If we forgot that... We promised to do everything we could to obtain peace. Have we? Of course, I'm convinced that war is not an eternal scourge. Modern technology is making war more and more destructive. There will come a time when war will be so destructive that it will no longer be possible. It will preclude itself. Either, or. And mankind will have to choose.

*Kollontai.* We'll expect the best of mankind.

*Lenin.* We'll expect the best of mankind. In the meantime... (*A clock strikes.*) Happy New Year, Comrades!

There is a burst of music and suddenly, as if on command, bayonets bristle and the Chorus becomes a mass of soldiers, fleeing from the front. The benches, pushed together, become the roof of a train car: every square centimetre is taken by force. Now the menacing, armed mob, filled with hatred, turns on us, singing a wild song, and the tempo and expression of the music crescendo... until it all abruptly ends.

The stage lights go up and we see *Lenin*. He is waiting for someone. Enter *Krupskaya*.

*Krupskaya.* Did you see *Novaya Zhizn*?<sup>3</sup> There's an enormous editorial: Bolshevism is a threat to culture. Gorky must be behind it.

*Lenin (angrily).* And millions of muzhiks with rifles in their hands — isn't that a threat to culture? Does he think the Constituent Assembly can deal with their anarchy? We can, if we don't make fools of ourselves.

*Krupskaya.* A walk? So late?

*Lenin.* My head's buzzing and I want to talk with somebody. Bukharin and I arranged to meet. Want to come along?

*Krupskaya.* I'm tired. Don't keep him long: if Nadezhda Mikhailovna wakes up and finds him gone, she'll worry.

*Lenin.* How does she feel?

*Krupskaya.* How can you ask, Volodya? Bedridden for the rest of her life, and at such a young age, too! How would you feel?

*Lenin.* What do the doctors say?

*Krupskaya.* It's irreversible. He's her husband and her

nurse... They're very courageous people... both of them...

*Lenin.* We should think about how we can help them... Let's pay them a visit some time soon.

*Krupskaya.* All right. Here comes Nikolai Ivanovich. *(She exits.)*

*Enter Bukharin.*

*Bukharin.* Sorry, I was held up at the paper. We're flooded with letters. Everyone's up in arms over the German demands. The general feeling seems to be that we mustn't sign. They insist on a revolutionary war.

*Lenin.* If we had as many regiments as resolutions... How about a walk, Nikolai Ivanovich? You won't be cold in that jacket?

*Bukharin.* It's all right.

*Lenin.* Well, what do you think, Nikolai Ivanovich? How do we go about unravelling this problem?

*Bukharin.* We don't have much choice. Either an ignominious peace or a revolutionary war, with a number of brutal defeats at first, of course... We've got to add up all the pluses and minuses.

*Lenin.* Go ahead.

*Bukharin.* An ignominious separate peace. A complete breach of our internationalist obligations. Why? Because the German capitalist machine is falling apart as fast as it can, and we're not only playing at peace negotiations but we're about to strengthen that machine by concluding a treaty with it.

*Lenin.* Falling apart? Are you sure?

*Bukharin.* Vladimir Ilyich, you don't want to see what's perfectly plain.

*Lenin.* Revolution in Germany? No, I don't see it. And when do you think the revolution will occur?

*Bukharin.* I am certain that the winter and spring will see the complete collapse of German capitalism, if we assist, of course.

*Lenin.* What date, Nikolai Ivanovich? On what date will the revolution begin in Berlin? You know I deal in realities, I need to put together my tactics — a precise date, if you would be so kind!

*Bukharin.* I'm not saying that the revolution will happen tomorrow, but I insist that we are on the eve of it.

*Lenin.* Can you guarantee that the revolution will occur



in Germany in three, four, five weeks? Can you? No, you can't. Unfortunately, Nikolai Ivanovich, it's all crystal gazing. A game. And what if my analysis of the situation in Germany is correct? That the revolution is coming, but Germany isn't ready for it yet and we can't predict the date? What then? I realise that your tactics are based on the assumption that the revolution will happen tomorrow. But can tactics be built on assumptions that are clearly debatable? You'd be the first to make fun of me...

*Bukharin.* Still, the day will come when I'll say to you, "Vladimir Ilyich, revolution in Berlin!" We'll see how you feel then, whether you can look us in the eye!

*Lenin.* I'll be overjoyed.

*Bukharin.* Then why...

*Lenin.* Nikolai Ivanovich, emotions aren't of any help to us here. Let's have your minuses.

*Bukharin.* All right. Peace will help Wilhelm strangle the budding revolution. The very one that, in your words, is coming. He'll take a couple of divisions from our front and use them against his own working class. He'll stick Russian bread down the throats of the hungry, dissatisfied man who doesn't give a damn about anything but his own personal interests.

*Lenin.* Now those are serious arguments, serious... I have to give this some thought. (*Suddenly.*) All right, let's say we get involved and the revolution in Germany doesn't happen? Then it'll be all over for us, won't it?

*Bukharin:* Why can't you see that our revolutionary war will deal Germany such a blow that the revolution will start there tomorrow, not the day after? The Germans just need one push, and our revolutionary war would do the trick. It's our duty, Vladimir Ilyich, why can't you see that?

*Lenin.* Remember what the grand old men said? "The victorious proletariat cannot force blessings of any kind on a foreign nation without undermining its own victory." Yes, forced blessings... That's a profound thought and we must never forget it, Nikolai Ivanovich. We'll be heading for a complete break with Marxism and get muddled up over the nature of the revolution if we shift the focus to outside instigation. We'll always assist revolutionary movements but they should be endemic. We won't push anybody! (*He is silent for a moment.*) You're all pregnant with world revolution.

*Bukharin.* You're right, we are. And we know full well who the father is. You, Vladimir Ilyich.

*Lenin (laughing heartily).* Yes, well, I won't deny it... Don't misunderstand, Nikolai Ivanovich, I'm also hoping for revolution in Germany, I'm living for world revolution, too. And there's just one cardinal question here: how can we be of genuine assistance?

*Bukharin.* I'm convinced we won't be able to last a year if we don't get the support of a Western European revolution right away.

*Lenin.* Evidently that's what our disagreement boils down to. Are you sure that we can't do it alone? You and I argued about this before the revolution. Well, I don't just think that we can start building socialism in Russia: I think we can be successful if we determine the proper ways and means of achieving our goal. That's the trick. All right, let's go on. A revolutionary war. Who's going to fight it?

*Bukharin.* Right now we don't have an army, that's a fact, but it will grow out of the partisan detachments. It'll grow in the course of the struggle.

*Lenin (unable to restrain himself).* At what price?

*Bukharin.* Any! But at least we'll preserve our integrity in the eyes of the world and ourselves. Integrity and moral irreproachability — no revolutionary could wish for anything better!

*Lenin.* But what about our integrity in the eyes of the people? They didn't entrust us with abstractions, with empty words and phrases. They entrusted us with lives ... real, concrete lives ... their lives. What do you think, does the revolution exist for the people, or do the people exist for the revolution? Do we serve the people or do they serve us?

*Bukharin.* Vladimir Ilyich, tell me, have you already made up your mind? Is it all clear to you?

*Lenin.* Good heavens, no, Nikolai Ivanovich! My head's buzzing with questions.

A group of Chorus members, who have been standing around a man, come towards *Lenin* and *Bukharin*.

*Voices.* Comrade Lenin! Comrade Bukharin!

*Worker (from the Chorus).* Comrade Lenin... A comrade from the West ... over here ... he fled ... the news is terrible...

*Refugee (continuing his story).* They were all taken to the

ravine ... machine-gunned down... The whole organisation, seventeen people... The German commandant wouldn't let them be buried for three days. Don't desert us, Comrades! If the Germans keep the Ukraine and Lithuania it will be all over for us. Comrades, we belong to the same party, don't desert us! There are dozens of workers in prisons there, waiting their turn... They'll be killed... Surely you won't desert us, brothers? Gallows have been erected! Who are you abandoning us to? Comrades! Help us! Don't betray us, brothers!

*Bukharin.* There, there, Comrade. Don't worry. Come along with me to the *Pravda* offices. We'll print your story in tomorrow's edition. Come on, come on... (*To Lenin.*) There are real, concrete lives in the Ukraine and Courland to think of, too, Vladimir Ilyich. They're waiting, too. (*He exits along with the refugee and members of the Chorus.*)

Lenin stands alone silently, thinking. A spotlight falls on the Chorus. A *soldier* rises.

*Soldier.* Lenin, the Smolny, Petrograd. Dear Comrade Lenin and the other People's Commissars, please make peace as soon as you can 'cause we soldiers are running out of patience, we can't take the hunger and cold of the trenches any more. We have no more strength, and on top of that our families write us that they're dying because they don't have anything to eat, so all of us soldiers are saying the same thing—enough of this sitting at our positions, we want to go home. Make some kind of peace treaty for us. If you haven't by January we'll go home no matter what and, what's more, we'll go to Petrograd and overthrow your government and put one in its place that will give us peace. Please, Comrade Lenin, do everything in your power to bring about peace, and if the butchers murder you, your memory will live forever, like Jesus Christ's. Give us peace! Give us peace! Otherwise nothing else is of any use. In the name of my fellow soldiers, Sharonov.

While the soldier's letter is being read, small tables and bentwood chairs are arranged on stage; they represent the dining hall of the Smolny. An enormous line stretches off into the wings. People emerge carrying tea and a couple of open-faced sandwiches, sit down at the tables, quickly finish their breakfast and leave. *Sverdlov* joins *Lenin*, who intently listening to the soldier's letter, and together they go to the dining hall, greeting acquaintances

along the way, and take their place in line. Obviously there is nothing unusual about this.

*Lenin.* Yakov Mikhailovich, are we getting any responses to our request concerning Brest?

*Sverdlov.* Flooded with them. The overwhelming majority are opposed to the German terms and insist on a revolutionary war. We're mainly getting the opinion of committees and their heads, though.

*Lenin.* Right. We should try and sound out the masses...

*Sidorenko (entering from the wings).* Vladimir Ilyich, allow me to take your breakfast to your study.

*Lenin.* Thank you, but I have a rare opportunity to talk to the others here. I appreciate the offer, though. (*To Sverdlov.*) Have you been to the Bukharins' lately?

*Sverdlov.* I took some specialists there yesterday.

*Lenin.* Well?

*Sverdlov.* There's nothing they can do. They say she'll be a complete invalid.

*Lenin.* Does she know?

*Sverdlov.* I think she guesses.

*Lenin.* What about Nikolai Ivanovich?

*Sverdlov.* It's hard on him. He's awfully worried and gets angry when anyone asks him about it.

*Lenin.* What can we do to help?

They disappear into the wings. *Dzerzhinsky, Bukharin, Kollontai* and *Lomov* emerge carrying their breakfasts and sit down at a table on the apron. *Sidorenko* finishes his breakfast and leaves.

*Lomov.* If Nikolai has understood him correctly and he's leaning towards peace it could mean a real crisis... It's capitulation along the whole front. The workers won't understand.

*Bukharin.* He'd tell you, "Explain it to them correctly, honestly, and they'll understand."

*Lomov.* Our compromise with German imperialism? What was it we said yesterday? Peace between peoples versus peace between governments!

*Bukharin.* Yesterday that was right, today it's not. That's axiomatic.

*Lomov.* Sorry, I agree that what was right yesterday can be wrong today, but not when it comes to Marxism.

*Bukharin.* And he'd fire back, "Marxism especially! Marx can't develop Marxism any more, so we have to."

*Lomov.* I don't understand, do you agree with him?

*Bukharin.* We have to give serious arguments.

*Dzerzhinsky.* Comrades, I just can't believe it. After everything we've been through, after all the blood that's been shed, do they think we'll sit calmly by and watch the barons and landowners reinstall themselves in Poland, Lithuania and the Ukraine? And watch the Soviets be wiped out? And watch our comrades be hanged? I'd rather put a bullet in my brain. Are you sure you understood him, Nikolai? Are you sure it wasn't a slip of the tongue?

*Kollontai (catching sight of Lenin entering from the wings carrying his breakfast).* Ask him.

*Lenin and Sverdlov sit down at a distant table.*

*Lomov (to Kollontai).* Don't get him worked up. *(To Dzerzhinsky.)* Forget it, Felix.

But Dzerzhinsky has already risen and is striding towards *Lenin*.

*Dzerzhinsky (anxiously).* Vladimir Ilyich, they say, in fact, they insist, that you're leaning towards accepting the German demands. Is that true? If it is, it's a mistake!

*Lenin.* I think I'm weighing all the pros and cons, Felix Edmundovich.

*Dzerzhinsky.* But I hope you won't make such an important decision without discussing it with the Central Committee first?

*Lenin.* That goes without saying.

*Dzerzhinsky.* Thank you. *(He returns to his table).* Nikolai was right. I just can't believe it. It's a great mistake.

*Kollontai (to Dzerzhinsky).* Take it easy. Why, your hands are trembling. He's still thinking things over — there's still hope.

*Lomov.* No, he's made up his mind. Look how calm he is.

*Bukharin.* It's always that way — unusual outward calm and a storm raging within. Most likely he didn't sleep a wink last night. Just like in '14, when I went to Poronino and told him that Roman Malinovsky was definitely a police agent. The Old Man didn't believe me. He said, "You're ready to believe any rumour you hear." But he was very subdued. No wonder! The leader of the Bolshevik faction in the State Duma and a Central Committee member — a police agent! That's enough to give anyone pause. But he was



perfectly impassive. Showed me to a tiny little room upstairs, and then spent the whole night on the terrace pacing back and forth, back and forth, stopping for a second, then pacing again. I couldn't sleep and heard everything. But in the morning he was neatly dressed and cleanly shaven. His face was wan and he had dark circles under his eyes, like now, but his gestures were just as confident as ever. He laughed heartily and said, "Well, did you get a good night's sleep? Ha-ha-ha! All right, how about some tea? Would you like some bread? Shall we go for a walk?" And the look in his eyes was so sad you'd think he was ready to throw himself under a train. But if you tried to comfort him he lashed out at you. So we know what that calmness means.

Having finished breakfast, Lenin and Sverdlov get up and leave.

*Kollontai.* Comrades, the party won't agree to that kind of peace treaty with the Germans. Lenin has great prestige but we've got heads on our shoulders, too. We bear as much responsibility for the revolution as he does. Enough of this moping! We have common sense and a majority in the Central Committee on our side.

*Bukharin.* But we have to line up the local organisations by the time the Central Committee meets. The Old Man won't go against the party. (*To Lomov.*) Georgy, why don't you go to Moscow, get all of our people together and have the Moscow Committee pass a strongly worded resolution...

*Sidorenko* hurries in.

*Sidorenko.* Did Vladimir Ilyich leave?

*Kollontai.* Just now. What's happened, *Sidorenko*?

*Sidorenko.* A soldier ... from Brest ... a personal letter from Trotsky...

A spotlight falls on the Chorus and *Trotsky*, the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs and head of the Russian delegation at the peace talks, rises. The dining hall disappears and is replaced by Lenin's study. Two people are there: *Lenin*, who is reading the letter, and a *Soldier from Brest*.

*Trotsky.* Dear Vladimir Ilyich, I am sending you these proposals with a courier who will be crossing the front. It is absolutely clear to me that we cannot fight now. But can the Germans fight? Can they march on our revolution when

it, say, declares that the war is over? Shouldn't we try to put the German working class and the German Army to the test: the Russian revolution, which declares the war is over, on the one hand, or Wilhelm's government, ordering the slaying of the revolution, on the other. I am deeply convinced that this situation would spark the revolutionary explosion in Germany we need, just as we need revolution in France, Britain and America, otherwise we won't even survive a year. The clear realisation of this leads me to propose a political demonstration: in reply to a German ultimatum, we will declare that we are pulling out of the war and demobilising our army but that we will not sign an extortionate peace treaty. Neither peace nor war! If, as I sincerely believe, the German generals are unable to move their forces against us, then that will mean revolution in Germany and a gigantic victory for us with immense consequences. If, however, it turns out that they can strike us we'll always be able to capitulate early enough. Cable your reply using the phrase, "the plan is good, go ahead". (*He sits down.*)

Having read the letter, Lenin puts it aside and turns to the soldier.

*Lenin.* Thank you. So what happened next, when you crossed the frontline?

*Soldier.* When I started to crawl across the no man's land I shouted, "Don't shoot, fellows, I'm one of you!" but nobody answered, silence. I flopped down into a trench but it was empty. Then I went down the communication trench to the second line — there weren't nobody there, either. Near the woods I spotted a gun. I went over to it and looked— there weren't a thing wrong with it, and nobody there, too. Next to it I saw these ruts from another gun. They went towards the German trenches. Later on I found out that before the soldiers had taken off they'd sold three guns to the Germans and left the other. I found the unit two versts on. Turned out they were getting ready to go home. Nobody paid me any attention. Well, they formed up and the NCO made a speech about how the army was falling apart and he even burst into tears. He told'em that anybody who wanted to could leave their rifles behind...

*Lenin.* Did they?

*Soldier.* Not a one, they all took'em with'em. Then a Bolshevik made a speech and tried to talk'em into staying so the

front wouldn't be exposed, but they weren't listening. They went to the station and commandeered a train. And I went with'em. That's how I got here.

*Lenin.* Tell me, now, why are the soldiers going home of their own accord? Leaving the front exposed, selling their weapons... Why didn't they listen to what the Bolshevik had to say? The Bolsheviks have given the soldiers everything. But from what you're saying the soldiers are going against the Bolsheviks. Why?

*Soldier (angrily).* What have them Bolsheviks given us? What? All's they've done is make promises.

*Lenin.* What about land? Didn't they give you land? Have you read the decree on land?

*Soldier.* Sure, I got it here! Here! *(He pulls a piece of paper folded twice from under his jacket.)* But what good does this decree of yours do me at the front? I could use it when I go to the john, maybe, but there ain't much of it...

*Lenin.* But didn't they give you the right to land? What you wanted so much, fought so hard to get...

*Soldier.* To land... If a soldier stays at his position then he ain't got the right to land, he's got the right to be buried 6 feet under. We had that right with Kerensky.<sup>4</sup>

*Lenin.* Even so, the front can't just be abandoned. Couldn't they have waited for orders, for replacements?

*Soldier.* We're sick and tired of waiting, Comrade Lenin. It's a disgrace to call that a front, anyway. Not a living soul for ten versts to the right or left... But the soldier's got plenty of stuff to do at home. It'll be time to plant soon, got to get ready, and then we've got to get this land the decree promises us... *(He carefully folds up the decree and tucks it away under his jacket.)* When I touch the land the Soviet allots me with my own hands then I'll tell you whether the Bolsheviks gave us land, Comrade Lenin.

*Lenin (observing with interest how the soldier puts the decree away).* I see. Well, thank you very much. Good-bye.

They shake hands. The soldier exits.

*(Lenin picks up the telephone.)* The Commissariat for Nationalities, please... Hello. Where's Stalin?... Here's why I'm calling. The Kiev Rada — the bourgeois government of the Ukraine — is negotiating with the Germans in Brest behind our delegation's back. They could conclude a separate peace with Germany tomorrow if not today and give the

Germans all of the Ukraine. I need information about what's going on in the Ukraine right away. I can't be clear on this until I hear Stalin's report. Have him go to the direct wire as soon as he comes in. I'll be there.

Lenin leaves his study and goes to the telegraph stage left. Trotsky goes to the other. The télégraphs spring to life.

*Trotsky (dictating).* Trotsky asks Lenin whether he received the letter. Immediate reply needed. Please phrase your reply "agreed" or "not agreed"...

*Lenin (dictating).* Lenin here. I have just received your special letter. Stalin is not here, and I have not been able to show it to him yet. I think your plan is worth discussing. Can its final implementation just be postponed for a bit until a final decision has been made at a special meeting of the Central Executive Committee here? As soon as Stalin returns I will show him the letter. Lenin.

*Trotsky (dictating).* We will try to postpone implementing the decision as long as possible in anticipation of a message from you. Hurry matters on your end. The Kiev Rada delegation is pursuing a clearly treacherous policy. I do not think discussing the plan in the Central Executive Committee is advisable, because it could trigger a reaction before the plan is carried out. Trotsky.

*Lenin (dictating).* To Trotsky. I would like to consult Stalin before replying to your question. Lenin.

*Trotsky (dictating).* I'll be waiting. Trotsky.

The spotlights on the telegraphs are extinguished. *Stalin* enters Lenin's study wearing an overcoat and fur cap with ear flaps.

*Sidorenko.* Iosif Vissarionovich! At last! Vladimir Ilyich is at the direct wire and asked that you join him as soon as...

*Stalin.* In a minute, in a minute... (*He sits down.*) Let me get my breath... Just one pipe... (*He lights his pipe.*) So tell me what's been going on. Just take your time and try to remember everything... Even the most minute details... I have to know everything. Otherwise I can't give Lenin the right advice.

*Sidorenko.* Well, actually...

The telephone rings.

That'll be from Vladimir Ilyich. They've been calling every ten minutes.

*Stalin.* Calm them down. Say I still haven't come, that I'll be here any minute.

*Sidorenko.* Hello? He still hasn't come. He'll be here any minute now... Yes, I'll tell him. (*He puts down the receiver.*) As soon as you arrive you're to go to the telegraph room. Vladimir Ilyich is speaking with Trotsky and...

*Stalin.* You were saying...

*Sidorenko.* Well, actually nothing in particular. Except for a rumour that Vladimir Ilyich is leaning towards signing a peace treaty right away on the terms that have been laid down.

*Stalin.* A pretty significant rumour. What's been the reaction?

*Sidorenko.* Bukharin, Dzerzhinsky, Lomov and Kollontai are indignant. Sverdlov is in favour.

*Stalin.* What do you think the chances are that the rumour is true?

*Sidorenko.* It's hard to say.

*Stalin.* What about Trotsky?

*Sidorenko.* I don't know.

The telephone rings again.

*Stalin (nodding towards the phone).* I'm on my way to the telegraph room. (*As he is leaving.*) Find out what position Smilga and Bubnov are taking. (*Exits.*)

*Sidorenko.* All right. (*Picking up the receiver.*) He's on his way to the telegraph room.

Spotlights on the telegraphs. Trotsky is waiting stage right. Lenin is listening to Stalin's report stage left.

*Stalin (gesturing with his pipe).* Essentially a civil war is raging in the Ukraine. A Bolshevik government of the Soviet Ukraine has been formed in Kharkov and it is in control of the situation. The ground is slipping from under the feet of the Kiev Rada not by the day — by the hour.

The telegraph comes on.

*Telegraph operator (to Lenin).* We're through to Brest.



*Lenin (dictating).* Stalin has just arrived. We'll discuss your proposal and give you our answer right away.

*Stalin (continuing).* Those are the facts and facts are stubborn things. Given what I've said and given that the Kiev Rada is on its last legs, doesn't represent a serious political force and is negotiating behind our backs in Brest, I propose that we not have anything more to do with that so-called Rada and declare merciless opposition to it until the Ukrainian Soviets have attained a complete victory.

*Lenin.* And now read this. (*He hands Stalin the letter from Trotsky.*) The soldier who brought it had some very interesting information. Even so, I think Trotsky will have to break off the negotiations and come back so that we can reach an understanding.

*Stalin (returning the letter).* I agree with you, Vladimir Ilyich. It's not entirely clear to me, but I don't have to go into it any further: I have faith in you, Vladimir Ilyich.

*Lenin.* I don't want you to have faith in me. I want you to understand what I'm saying.

*Stalin.* I'll look into it, Vladimir Ilyich, and please excuse my unfortunate words.

*Lenin (dictating).* To Trotsky: Please call an adjournment and return to Petrograd. Lenin, Stalin.

A burst of music. Red strobe lights fall on the Chorus. It is transformed. Enter a *gentleman in tails*.

*Gentleman in tails.* Good evening, ladies and gentlemen! Cultural life in the capital is swinging. Now, after the temporary misunderstandings of October somebody took it into his head to call a revolution, our sated, decayed and therefore immortal café chantant, The Red Lantern, has once more opened its welcoming doors. Orchestra, may I have a flourish, please! (*Confidingly.*) I won't hide from you, ladies and gentlemen, that we only received permission because the gentlemen "comrades" at the local authority were tickled "pink" when they learned the colour of our lantern. If they had their way, they'd light a lantern that colour over all of Russia. But we hope that our Red Lantern will be the one and only, and we'll lend a hand to see that it is. If we fail to entertain you, though, you can go next door, where great proletarian art is being born. I have here an announcement that appeared in today's paper. "The Sov. Workers'-Soldiers' Dep. and the Cult.-Ed. Sec. present the first prol.

show—Chernyshev's *Money Doesn't Bring Happiness* and the mus. com. *High Prices* — at the Red Star Club." You have a choice, ladies and gentlemen, you have a choice! I call you "ladies and gentlemen" and not "former ladies and gentlemen" as some so-called comrades of the present do. But isn't it a paradox of history that the only true comrades may prove to be former ladies and gentlemen? We begin our show with a question that has everyone concerned. On October 25, 1917 did time stop?

A number called "The Clock" is performed. Against the backdrop of an enormous carpet, the face of the clock, women representing the hours 12, 3, 6 and 9 stand frozen. Music begins to play and gradually the women come to life, dance and sing:

*There stands on a mantle, alongside a candle  
A clock in the finest of taste.  
Abused and despised, the owner realised  
He must leave with all possible haste.  
The ships are not running, the plants have stopped humming.  
Socialism carries the day!  
But alongside the candle on the now dusty mantle  
The old clock keeps ticking away.  
There's not much more that can go wrong.  
Tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock...  
Just wait a bit, it won't be long.  
Tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock...*

*My studies I gave up in order to take up  
The oldest profession on earth,  
And I'm just overjoyed to know I'm employed  
In work of immense social worth.  
Come soldier, come sailor, I offer my labour.  
It's time for us all to unite.  
Charge with a great cheer from the front and the rear,  
And show me your working-class might.*

*Listen my friends, hear the proud call.  
Tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock...  
We have been nought, we shall be all  
Tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock...*

Now everyone can see that time has not stopped but is, in fact, ticking away the comrades' final hours. A tango, ladies and gentlemen!

*Trotsky*, back from Brest, makes his way through the dancers.  
*Lenin* walks towards him.  
The stage becomes *Lenin's* study.

*Lenin*. No, your demonstration smacks of adventurism. Right now there is nothing on earth more important than our revolution. It has to be secured no matter what.

*Trotsky*. Fine. Here's another consideration. The British and French press depict us as none other than the Kaiser's agents. That theme is currently very popular. The Bolsheviks take power and sign a peace treaty with Germany which is obviously not to their advantage. Why? Because they're German spies... Germany will withdraw troops from the Russian front and throw them into battle against the British and French. Do you realise what confusion all this will cause in the heads of the European worker? How will we look in his eyes? And how much easier that will make it for the Entente to intervene against us! After all, they'll be intervening against German spies who have seized power in Russia. Then naturally the European worker won't oppose intervention. But if we declare "neither peace nor war" we will be giving the European worker clear and irrefutable proof of the enmity between us and Wilhelm's government.

*Lenin*. It's certainly reasonable for you to ask, what about France, what about Britain? Another question keeps going through my head, though: what about the village outside Ryazan? What will Russia's peasant say? It would be nice if we could resolve the whole problem at once, but evidently a choice has to be made. Today the peasants are more important.

*Trotsky*. Is that where Bukharin got the phrase "a peasant peace" from?

*Lenin*. Maybe... By the way, practically a whole faction has formed around him. They're itching to go to war. It's partly to do with youth...

*Trotsky*. Intelligent people can make silly mistakes, particularly in their youth. But, as Heine himself advised, that right shouldn't be abused.

*Lenin*. He's only 29.

*Trotsky*. Already 29. You're too lenient with him, Vladimir Ilyich. I've been watching your "love affair" for a long time now...

*Lenin*. No one can accuse me of being soft when it comes

to matters of principle. As for being lenient... We're comrades... Members of the same party... It's true, though, nothing is more painful than disagreements between people who share the same convictions. (*He is silent.*) All right, let's say we adopt your plan: we refuse to sign a treaty, disband the army and the Germans turn a deaf ear to your eloquent words and attack. What would you do then?

*Trotsky.* Sign a peace treaty immediately, but at the point of a bayonet. The legend of our backroom deal with Wilhelm would be dead and buried, and we would have the working class throughout the world on our side.

*Lenin.* You wouldn't support a revolutionary war in that event?

*Trotsky.* Certainly not. You have my word for it.

*Lenin.* You wouldn't have time to sign a treaty, that beast lunges too fast. Here's what would happen: resounding defeats would force Russia to sign an even more disadvantageous and extortionate treaty with terms much worse than the ones we've been given now. But you wouldn't be the one to sign it. A couple of defeats and the peasant army will turn its guns on us and overthrow our government. The peace treaty will be concluded by a bourgeois government or worse.

*Trotsky.* I understand what you're saying. And I'd be glad to second it. But I could never forgive myself if we didn't perform this experiment. With one clever tactical move we could carry the whole thing off!

*Lenin.* The best place for experiments is in the laboratory — in real life they have too high a price. Aren't you forgetting that you'd be experimenting with people... real people... all the people? You're convinced that the Germans won't attack. But what basis do you have? It's just a feeling. What facts do you have to back it up? None. So it's just an empty phrase. Can policy be built on phrases? Neither peace nor war — it sounds lovely, enticing... But we'd be laying the heart of the country open to attack. Have you thought about that?

*Trotsky.* But the German revolution...

*Lenin.* What if it doesn't happen? What then?

*Trotsky.* Vladimir Ilyich, if, if, if...

*Lenin.* But we can't do without those ifs. Tactics are a tricky thing, I must tell you... If you can't back down when necessary, accommodate, if you aren't disposed to crawl on your belly in the mud, then you're a windbag, not a revo-

lutionary. I don't like this alternative either, but there's no other way. We have to save Russia from disaster, it's our duty...

*Trotsky.* I'm very sorry that we're disagreeing over tactics again, Vladimir Ilyich.

*Lenin.* Oh, our disagreements aren't over tactics at all. Why pretend?

*Trotsky.* Time will tell who was right.

*Lenin.* It smacks of adventurism, Lev Davidovich.

*Trotsky.* But why? Why? Can't you see that the internationalist aims of our revolution dictate...

*Lenin.* Just one thing: that we build socialism, not talk about it. Socialism has been built in books, now we need to do it in reality. History has given us a chance. The world needs a shining example. It would have enormous significance. But so would our failure: people would turn away from socialism. That's why I'll always put the building of socialism in Russia first in determining what our internationalist duty is. And building socialism is our first priority. What do we need today then, peace or war? Peace invariably. We could never be the instigators of a war because war is alien to socialism's nature. Defence is another matter. That is a necessary response. Peace invariably. And today in particular. Now tell me, how can war with Wilhelm help us build socialism with the millions of problems we face?

*Trotsky.* The party activists will be meeting in an hour. We'll try our ideas out on them.

*Lenin.* All right. I've prepared theses for the immediate signing of a treaty.

*Trotsky.* After you, Bukharin will speak in support of revolutionary war and then it will be my turn.

A spotlight falls on the Chorus. A *worker* rises.

*Worker.* Sverdlov, Central Executive Committee, Petrograd. The workers of the Surgansk Mines are opposed to an ignominious peace and demand that a revolutionary war be declared on the Germans. Adopted unanimously. Soviet of Deputies Chairman Martynov.

The benches where the Chorus sat are now empty — everyone has gone to the meeting. Somewhere a door opens and *Sverdlov's voice* can be heard.



*Voice of Sverdlov.* Our meeting is coming to a close, all the speakers have presented their views. Three alternatives have been put forward. We will now vote. May I remind you, comrades, that we will merely be making a recommendation. The final decision rests with the Central Committee at its meeting tomorrow. Would those who support Comrade Lenin's proposal please raise their hands. One, two...

Suddenly there is silence: someone has left the room and shut the door.

*Lenin* enters and sits down on an empty bench. The door is quickly opened and shut once more. Enter *Inessa Armand*.

*Armand.* Vladimir Ilyich, are you all right?

*Lenin.* Yes ... it just got to be too much... Those blank, hostile looks... It was like talking to a wall. They listened but they didn't hear. You're opposed, too.

*Armand.* I am this time. But they weren't hostile. They were suffering. Suffering for you. Saprnov put the general feeling best: "He'll reconsider and come back. We couldn't ask for a better commander."

*Lenin.* No, I was the one on the podium. I saw the looks they gave me: hostile, alienated.

*Armand.* I could barely keep from crying.

*Lenin.* I wasn't persuasive?

*Armand.* Do you remember your last letter to me? I was so touched by the devoted and selfless friendship you expressed in it. And our friendship demands the truth, nothing but the truth. Vladimir Ilyich, you're not the man you were before October. He was a revolutionary: all passion and drive, "we'll dive in and take our chances".<sup>5</sup> And now? A timid apothecary who's afraid of his own shadow and spends his time figuring out how to obtain capital and preserve his innocence. You and Nadya and I strolled around the Smolny today and saw a worker detachment being formed. Remember how magnificently the workers held themselves, what heroes they were, what stately power there was in that trim fighting unit! Reach out to them and regain your old daring! It pains me to see your sallow face and the dark circles under your eyes.

*Lenin (bitterly).* And the fact that they only had a dozen rifles between them, that they don't know how to shoot and won't be able to fight — didn't you see that? Am I supposed not to say that they'd be pitting enthusiasm against cannons,

bare hands against sophisticated machines? Do you remember the mountains outside Bern? Remember the marvellous view we had from there? Practically all of Switzerland lay before us as though it were on the palm of our hand, and on a clear day we could see Mont Blanc. Well, what can I do if everything that awaits us if the party sides with you is as plain as if it were on the palm of my hand? Keep quiet? Not warn you for fear of being in the minority?

*Armand.* I'm not asking you to keep quiet, I'm asking you to listen to others.

*Lenin.* Who? Trotsky?

*Armand.* Empty words. His speech was wreathed in eloquent phrases, but it amounts to adventurism.

*Lenin.* Bukharin, then?

*Armand.* Vladimir Ilyich, the party leadership is almost overwhelmingly against you. Everyone thinks that peace plan of yours is treachery, a stab in the back. Like what Zinoviev and Kamenev did before the revolution.<sup>6</sup>

*Lenin.* That bad?

*Armand.* I don't know whether they'd dare tell you to your face, but that's what they're saying. Think of what committed people are lined up against you right now — Dzerzhinsky, Uritsky, Bukharin, Lomov, Yakovleva, Kollontai, Pyatakov, Volodarsky, Radek... Can you doubt their integrity or dedication to the revolution? Back in October and September when you were at odds with the Central Committee over the uprising, they were with you, supported you, demonstrated their best qualities on the 25th.

*Lenin.* Yes, they're all very close comrades. I've worked with them for many years and they've supported me in the most difficult times, that's true.

*Armand.* And who are you left with now? Zinoviev, who felt faint every time he heard the word "uprising". And Stalin, who's only with you because you are who you are. Is that what you want? For us to support you just because we believe in you? A step towards a new religion?

*Lenin.* Inessa Fyodorovna, you know very well that's not so. I want you to understand what I'm saying.

*Armand.* Then get ready to do battle, prove you're right, present new arguments. You were able to show me how stupid I was with that worker detachment.

Lenin looks at Armand, then begins to laugh. The meeting ends. The members of the Chorus return to their places.

*Armand (to Krupskaya).* Nadya, over here!

*Krupskaya.* Bukharin got 32 votes, Trotsky got 16 and we got 15.

*Lenin (his spirits restored).* Can we offer Inessa Fyodorovna some tea, Nadya?

*Krupskaya.* Would you come have tea with us? You're not afraid we'll convert you?

*Armand.* Don't be so sure I won't convert you.

*Lenin.* I don't think there's anything more horrible or difficult to bear than a struggle within the party. Still, the revolution's more important than our feelings.

*Krupskaya (to Armand).* I was thinking of the Second Congress.<sup>7</sup> *(To Lenin.)* Remember when it became clear that we would have to part ways with Martov and Zasulich? *(To Armand.)* He and I sat up the whole night, trembling.

The scene is Lenin's modest apartment in the Smolny. *Lenin* and *Armand* sit down at the table, *Krupskaya* goes about making the tea.

*Krupskaya.* I was at Lessner's this morning for the general meeting. It was awfully hard. They don't want to even hear about peace. It almost came to blows... About five people, older, with more experience, spoke in favour of peace. But they were drowned out by such a chorus of indignant cries.

*Armand.* Which proves my point.

*Lenin.* That's natural. It would have been odd if the majority of the working class reacted any other way. Today.

*Krupskaya.* You can't put your theses to the workers right now. They won't understand.

*Lenin.* Well, sure... Bukharin doesn't live in a vacuum, he attends those meetings. We saw today what the mood is among the party leadership and the heads of the Petrograd Committee.

*Krupskaya.* But maybe the mood of the leadership isn't in step with the mood of the party as a whole?

*Lenin.* That goes without saying. But don't forget that they are the party's best people, its activists, the ones who led the party to victory two months ago. The mood... Exactly, the mood! That's right! *(He laughs happily.)* Of course. *(In a sing-song.)* Mood, mood, mood. The fact of the matter is, the fleeting moods of a class and its basic interests may not coincide. I've always been preoccupied with basic in-

terests. What factors would influence the workers' mood? (*He ticks the points off on his fingers.*) Delusions produced by the ease of the victory between November and January, right? Right! Indignation over the Germans' effrontery and coercion, triggering spontaneous protest, right? Right! Well, Bukharin and his allies reflect that mood. But the point is that when push comes to shove and it's a question of life or death for Soviet government the workers will come to their senses instantly, while inertia will have Bukharin harping on about revolutionary war.

*Armand.* Come now, Vladimir Ilyich, that might not happen. You're not being fair to him.

*Krupskaya.* No, it might not.

*Lenin.* We'll see, we'll see. For the time being they're saying that the social wellspring of our opportunism is made of profiteers, peasants and the declassed soldiery. No, comrades, we express the basic interest of the working class, and they, incidentally, form an indissoluble alliance with the peasantry. War now means a total breach with the peasants. When the peasant touches the land the revolution gave him with his own hands, when he is faced with the danger of losing that land — that's when he'll defend it. The "Left" propose that we leap over that stage in the peasantry's development. If we do, we'll break our necks.

*Armand.* That's the Vladimir Ilyich I know, Nadya, and now I'm going to get out of here before your husband pins me to the wall with his logic.

*Lenin.* Thank you, Inessa Fyodorovna. You really helped me.

*Lomov* goes to the telegraph at the edge of the portal stage right.

*Lomov (dictating).* RSDLP Central Committee, the Smolny, Petrograd. The Moscow Regional Bureau of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party considers it necessary to immediately break off peace negotiations with imperialist Germany and to sever all diplomatic ties with the certified robbers of every country.

The scene is Lenin's study. Everything is in readiness for the Central Committee meeting: chairs have been arranged, paper distributed. One after another, the members of the Central Committee enter the study.

*Dzerzhinsky (to Bukharin).* Are we the first?

*Bukharin.* The Old Man is in the anteroom. He's standing at the window, reading Makarov's Dictionary, trying to get control of himself. I've never seen him like this.

*Dzerzhinsky.* I've been in an awful mood all day. It makes me feel bad to get into a dispute with him.

*Kollontai.* He'd be the first to disrespect us if we, his pupils, blindly repeated every word he said.

*Bukharin.* Comrades, this is going to be a tough fight. I think we should support Trotsky's proposal, so we won't be in the minority. It'll lead to war whatever.

*Lomov.* Maybe so.

The members of the Central Committee take their places. Those attending are Lenin, Sverdlov, Stasova, Lomov, Uriitsky, Kollontai, Stalin, Bukharin, Trotsky, Muranov, Bubnov, Artem, Zinoviev, Krestinsky and Dzerzhinsky.

*Sverdlov.* Comrades, the question of concluding a peace treaty is the item on today's agenda of the party Central Committee meeting. Are there any objections? Then we will consider it approved. Comrade Lenin has the floor.

*Lenin (pauses for a moment, then speaks).* Comrades, we Bolsheviks have never refused to protect and defend the socialist fatherland. But the question is, how we go about defending our fatherland today — with war or with peace. We cannot wage a war; the facts are clear to all of us. A policy of revolutionary war now would, perhaps, fulfil the need some might feel to make a grand gesture, but it would completely ignore the actual correlation of class forces and material factors. We are told that by waging war we will galvanise revolution in Germany. But Germany's revolution is still in the womb, while we've given birth to a bouncing baby — a socialist republic that we could murder by starting a war. Of course the treaty we conclude will be an odious peace but we must have breathing space to carry out social reforms, we must strengthen our hold and to do that we need time. What Trotsky proposes is an internationalist political demonstration that will only backfire because it will lay the heart of the country open to German attack. By signing a peace treaty we will naturally be betraying self-determining Poland, but we'll be saving socialist Russia and consolidating our achievements. Of course we'll be making a turn to the right that will take us through terrible muck, but we must make that turn. You should realise that once we have signed a peace treaty people throughout



the world will see that we are building a peaceful life, building socialism, while the imperialists continue to fight. Our socialist republic will be a living example to all nations, and the revolutionary impact of that will be immense.

*Sverdlov.* Comrade Bukharin has the floor.

*Bukharin.* Comrades, I think that the most correct position is Comrade Trotsky's. In Comrade Lenin's position I detect two contradictions. How can you say, Vladimir Ilyich, that we support defence? Defence presumes war. Right? Right. I have never run into a situation where peace was a defence. It doesn't make sense. Our problems have to be considered from an internationalist perspective. Comrade Lenin is wrong to oppose a political demonstration. Let the Germans pound us, let them advance another hundred versts — the German revolution will punish them. It is not in the interests of the German Social-Democrats that we sign a peace treaty, because if we do we'll be undermining their struggle. If we save our socialist republic and do not lift a finger to help the German revolution, we will be squandering the chances of the international workers' movement. That is the crux of the matter.

*Sverdlov.* Comrade Trotsky has the floor.

*Trotsky.* It seems to me that we should carefully analyse the situation and see what is most to our advantage. Right now transforming our strength into a military capability is a utopia. That is why the question of a revolutionary war seems unrealistic to me. The army has to be disbanded, but disbanding the army doesn't mean signing a peace treaty. By refusing to sign a treaty and demobilising we will be furthering the revolutionary process. At the same time we will clearly be demonstrating to the German Social-Democrats that we are not playacting.

*Sverdlov.* Comrade Stalin has the floor.

*Stalin.* Comrades, if we adopt the revolutionary war proposal we will naturally be playing into the hands of imperialism. At the same time Comrade Trotsky's position will not bring us success. There is no revolutionary movement in the West, there are no facts, just a potential and we cannot concern ourselves with potentials.

Movement among the Central Committee members.

Our socialist reforms agitate the West, and we need time to implement them. If we adopt Comrade Trotsky's proposal we

will be creating the worst conditions for the movement in the West, so I propose that we adopt Comrade Lenin's proposal.

*Sverdlov.* Comrade Zinoviev has the floor.

*Zinoviev.* Comrades, we are naturally faced with a difficult surgical operation, since by making peace we will be strengthening chauvinism in Germany and weakening the movement throughout the West for a while.

*Bukharin.* Which proves my point!

*Zinoviev.* Just a minute. There is another prospect — it is that our socialist republic will perish. But Comrade Trotsky's proposal is unacceptable, too, since Hoffmann will respond by saying that as we have not signed a peace treaty we are still at a state of war with them. Why continue this experiment when the consequences are already clear?

*Lenin.* Comrades, I have taken the floor to declare that I do not agree with some of the points made by Comrades Stalin and Zinoviev, though we have taken the same side on this question. In the West, Iosif Vissarionovich, there is not a potential but a mass movement, although it's true that the revolution hasn't begun there yet. I disagree with Zinoviev when he says that the movement in the West will be weakened for a time if we conclude a peace. There will, of course, be an orgy of chauvinism, but that won't hamper the German revolution. The point is that the revolution hasn't begun there, while we've got a squalling newborn on our hands. Yes, yes, Comrade Kollontai, and if we do not state clearly now that we will make peace, we will perish.

*Kollontai.* I understand you perfectly, Vladimir Ilyich, but I disagree with you completely.

*Dzerzhinsky.* Signing a peace treaty means capitulating our whole programme. I think that Vladimir Ilyich Lenin is underhandedly doing what Kamenev and Zinoviev did in October. Our conduct should be giving the West strength. It isn't. Comrade Lenin has pointed out to us many times that the poorest peasantry and proletariat are the bulwark of a socialist republic. We are the party of the proletariat, and we must open our eyes to the fact that the proletariat will not support us if we sign a peace treaty.

*Trotsky.* Comrades, I think it's clear to almost everyone here that it is impossible to wage a revolutionary war. I move a vote on calling for a revolutionary war.

*Sverdlov.* Let's take a vote. All those in favour... Bukharin and Lomov. Against... Eleven.

*Lenin.* I move that we put off signing a treaty.

**Sverdlov.** Let's take a vote. All those in favour... Twelve. Against... One, Lomov.

**Trotsky.** In that case I move that we vote on my alternative: we end the war, refuse to sign a peace treaty and demobilise the army.

**Sverdlov.** All right. Would all those in favour of that motion please raise their hands.

Trotsky, Bubnov, Bukharin, Dzerzhinsky, Kollontai, Krestinsky, Lomov, Stasova and Uritsky raise their hands.

Nine votes in favor. All those against...

Lenin, Sverdlov, Zinoviev, Stalin, Artem and Muranov raise their hands.

Six votes against, seven counting Smilga who wrote to say he is also opposed to Trotsky's proposal. The Central Committee has made its decision. Comrade Trotsky's proposal has passed. That brings us to the end of our agenda, Comrades. I do not think it is inappropriate to remind you that the decisions you have made must be kept completely secret. The meeting is adjourned.

The members of the Central Committee get up and leave the study. Sverdlov goes over to Lenin and sits down beside him.

**Sverdlov.** What are we going to do?

**Lenin.** What can we do?

**Sverdlov** (*shrugging his shoulders*). I don't know. (*He gets up and begins to pace.*) One thing is clear: the Germans won't pay the least attention to Trotsky's incantation. They'll attack, the remnants of the army will turn tail and run and our Council of People's Commissars will become an underground revolutionary committee. You know, Vladimir Ilyich, when that happens you and I won't be satisfied that we can get up and say, we told you so, we warned you, we wanted to sign a peace treaty. They'll tell us that in politics it's results, not intentions, that count, and they'll be right.

**Lenin.** What are you suggesting? That we openly oppose a Central Committee majority and reveal our hand to the Germans, show them we're divided? Out of the question.

**Sverdlov.** So what can we do?

**Lenin.** Now Yakov Mikhailovich, don't keep me on tenter-

hooks. What do you suggest? I can see you have an idea.

*Sverdlov.* Take advantage of our opportunities in the Central Committee.

*Lenin.* Which are?

*Sverdlov.* Trotsky. His mind isn't completely at ease. He's wavering. Do you think it was an accident that he proposed an end to the calls for a revolutionary war? That was a kind of gesture to us. We simply must take advantage of Trotsky's waverings. Use your personal influence and he'll sign the treaty in Brest.

*Lenin.* Do you think that's realistic?

*Sverdlov.* Absolutely. He'll be impressed that *you* make the request after losing.

*Lenin.* You don't think he'll go back on his word?

*Sverdlov.* He might. But then again he might not.

*Lenin (after a pause).* It goes against the grain.

*Sverdlov.* And how!

*Lenin.* What if we used the Congress of Soviets? The highest body of government... The Bolshevik faction could put forward a resolution giving the Council of People's Commissars unlimited powers to conclude a peace without specifying any terms...

*Sverdlov.* It's an idea...

*Lenin.* And if the faction is aware of the Central Committee vote, aware of our position, Trotsky's position, Bukharin's position, and still puts the resolution forward and the congress gives us those powers then my conversation with Trotsky would not just be a conversation between two members of the Central Committee but a conversation between the head of the government and his People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs.

*Sverdlov.* Yes, that's better.

*Lenin.* We'll be gambling more on a resolution by the congress than on Trotsky's waverings. And then it will be political tactics, not political intrigue.

Spotlight on the Chorus. *Blok* rises.

*Blok.* Here's something else I have realised — there is a workaday side to Bolshevism beyond the side that sours on wings. That is where it needs help. The people have wings, but they need help acquiring skills and knowledge. That is gradually being understood. Can it really be that many who have the "know-how" won't respond?

The scene is Lenin's study. *Lenin* and *Trotsky* are on stage. *Trotsky* is dressed in a hooded coat.

*Trotsky*. Well, I must say this conversation comes as a surprise to me. I stopped in to say good-bye and...

*Lenin*. We'll never forgive ourselves, and neither will history, if we don't save the revolution from disaster. Perhaps what you propose is more effective, but the price is too high.

*Trotsky*. What about the Central Committee?

*Lenin*. No serious revolutionary violates discipline, not even formal discipline, without having a compelling reason. But the person who uses discipline as a shield and tolerates a policy that he can see spells disaster is not a revolutionary but a spineless creature, a nonentity!

*Trotsky*. I understand what you are saying. (*Pause.*) What about the responsibility?

*Lenin*. I'll take all the responsibility. Please consider that as the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, I am categorically instructing you, the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, to sign a treaty in the event of a German ultimatum. I am acting on the basis of the decision by the Congress of Soviets, which gave the Council of People's Commissars unlimited powers to make a peace settlement. After the signing, I am ready to appear before any authorised party body.

*Trotsky*. Fine. I'll carry out your instructions.

*Lenin*. So, we'll hold on until the Germans issue an ultimatum, drag things out as long as possible and play for time, but once they make an ultimatum we give in. Can I count on you, Comrade Trotsky?

*Trotsky*. You can. Good-bye.

*Lenin*. Have a safe journey.

Exit Trotsky. Lenin gazes after him for a long time. Enter *Sverdlov*.

*Sverdlov*. Did it work?

Lenin nods.

Will he keep his word?

*Lenin* (*shrugging his shoulders*). Past experience doesn't speak in his favour, but he gave his word... I would have



preferred something more reliable, more substantial... But we'll have to content ourselves with Trotsky's word today. Unfortunately...

*Sverdlov.* Well, since a promise is an ephemeral thing, while they're busy deceiving one another in Brest, we'll work on the army. Peace is all well and good, but an army's an army.

*Lenin.* I've already told Podvoisky that our opposition to the war doesn't mean we don't have an obligation to be ready for war! We have to create an army at once. A Red Army. Let's get a decree ready.

Exit Sverdlov. Lenin goes over to the window and stands there for a long time, gazing up at the sky. Enter *Kollontai*. She hesitates, not wishing to disturb him.

Stars... what stars are out tonight. It must have gotten colder. (*To Kollontai.*) Do you ever gaze at a starry sky?

*Kollontai.* Only on the ocean or in the country.

*Lenin.* On the ocean? Oh, that's right, you've been to America. When I was a boy I knew all the constellations. I'm starting to forget them... Did you want to see me?

*Kollontai.* Vladimir Ilyich, I've promised the Baltic Fleet I'd bring you along to a rally. Whatever day is best for you. I'm being pestered from morning to night.

*Lenin.* No, I'm sorry.

*Kollontai.* But why? You've wanted to visit Kronstadt for a long time.

*Lenin.* Will there be questions about a peace settlement?

*Kollontai.* Of course!

*Lenin.* I can't put forward my own point of view, and as for putting forward another...

*Kollontai.* Even if it was adopted by the Central Committee?

*Lenin.* I'm sorry, but I'm human, too.

CURTAIN

## PART TWO

The Smolny dining hall during the lunch hour. Everyone from the Council of People's Commissars is here. They are noisy and in high spirits. Enter *Lenin*.

*Lenin*. Oh, it's pretty crowded. I'll come back later.

*Voice from the Line*. Later the Left SR Central Committee will be done with its meeting and this place will be packed. Better now.

*Dzerzhinsky*. Vladimir Ilyich, over here, I saved a place for you.

*Lenin*. Really?

*Voices*. He did, he did.

*Lenin (to Dzerzhinsky)*. Thank you.

*Sverdlov*, who has already eaten, goes over to *Lenin*. They move away.

*Sverdlov*. Radek arrived from Brest this morning. Judging by what he says they're doing as we agreed: they're dragging things out every way they can. But they'll only be able to keep it up a couple more days. Then an ultimatum will be issued.

*Lenin*. I see. What about things here?

*Sverdlov*. Bukharin and his cohorts are celebrating victory: skipping around the Smolny, beaming, not a shred of respectability left. Any day now they expect the talks will break down and we'll be drawn into war.

*Lenin*. That's all well and good, but have they lifted a finger to get ready for that war?

*Sverdlov*. Here's draft of the decree on the creation of an army.

Lenin takes the papers and starts to look them over. Absorbed in conversation, *Zinoviev* and *Stalin* get up from a table.

*Stalin*. No, Grigory Yevseyevich, I'm for total clarity. Gorky maintains he can't keep silent. He should be ashamed: he picked up a thing or two from Bolshevism once upon a time. It's not counterrevolution he can't keep silent about, it's the revolution he rhapsodised about at the teatable. Now that the going's gotten tough, though, he's hightailing it away like a scared rabbit.

*Zinoviev*. It's all the fault of that sniveling Menshevik crowd he's got around him—Sukhanov and Stroyev.

*Stalin*. And he's the Lamb of God? You're protecting him, trying to find a rationale. But I don't have any intention of delving into the workings of his mind. The Russian revolution has unseated quite a few authorities and it will keep on doing that. Anyone who gets in the way is dispensable. The revolution's strength lies in the fact that it does not kowtow to big names. It will either use them or consign them to oblivion if they have no desire to learn from the revolution and submit to it. Don't you think that Gorky isn't about to let Plekhanov, Kropotkin, Zasulich and that bunch rest on their laurels? Don't you think that on the great day for the peoples of the world when victory is ours the figure most out of place at the celebrations will be that ex-Stormy Petrel?

*Zinoviev*. You're an extremist but in this case I agree with you. What do you think of the prospects for Brest?

*Stalin (exiting)*. I think the middle course, Trotsky's position, gives us a way out of this difficult situation.

He exits along with *Zinoviev*.

*Lenin (overhearing Stalin's final comment, gazes after him for a long time, then says to Sverdlov)*. What is that supposed to mean? Trotsky's position gives us a way out of this difficult situation? A way out that might put an end to the revolution? What's all this bowing and scraping? We need independent minds, not yes-men. Or has he suddenly made a 180 degree turn? Why aren't you saying anything, Yakov Mikhailovich?

*Sverdlov (after a pause)*. I'm too well acquainted with Stalin.

*Lenin.* So you're not surprised. Is that what you want to say?

*Sverdlov (it is evident how hard he finds it to continue this conversation).* Yes, it is.

*Lenin.* Because you were in exile together?

*Sverdlov.* Let's drop the subject, Vladimir Ilyich... I'm afraid of being unobjective...

*Lenin.* What the hell are you talking about, Yakov Mikhailovich? This is a serious matter and you're acting like...

*Sverdlov.* It's his personality and...

*Lenin.* Well, if our personalities are going to have such a direct effect on politics...

*Sverdlov.* They will, Vladimir Ilyich. But it's not just a matter of personality. For Koba the party—we argued about this many times—is like a knightly order.

*Lenin.* A knightly order?

*Sverdlov.* Yes, a closed knightly order with its own hierarchy, discipline, philosophy and moral code.

*Lenin.* But that could lead to...

*Sverdlov.* Exactly. Christianity won over the masses by preaching goodness and justice but the Inquisition saw torture and burning at the stake in the name of Christ. I don't think Koba understands our position, Vladimir Ilyich. He shares it and votes with us, but he doesn't understand it.

*Lenin (smiles, then says).* Well, we won't be hard on the excesses of the self-educated, with Stalin one of their proud number.

*Sverdlov.* We'll try not to. Lukina's at four?

*Lenin.* Fine. I'll drop by after dinner. As for Stalin, I'll have to have a talk with him.

Exit Sverdlov. Lenin comes downstage to the apron.

*Lenin (aside).* By placing our hopes on Brest aren't we letting Petrograd slip through our fingers? Every day the public is subjected to ultra-Left rhetoric by Bukharin and company. We can't discount that. While they talk we keep silent and let them go unrefuted. That means the public judges our position by what Bukharin says. What are we counting on? Time? Having events prove our point, win the others over, put everything in place? If my analysis is correct, the ground will slip from under Bukharin's feet. The mood will swing in hours, not days. We have to keep an eye out for changes in the mood of the masses, for signs that indicate

a positive trend... Damn, have I fallen into a trap of my own making by opposing the Bukharin scheme? Maybe it's wrong to keep silent any more? Maybe we have to speak out, put our point of view across to the public... What will that involve? Going against the tide. It won't be the first time. That doesn't frighten me. On the other hand, that would mean letting the Germans in on everything. Can't do that. As long as we can count on the facts changing people's minds and Trotsky's promise to sign we have to keep quiet. What could be more awful than silence when you want to scream?!

*Dzerzhinsky's voice (from the wings).* Vladimir Ilyich, your turn!

*Lenin.* Coming, coming!

Lenin goes off-stage and immediately reenters carrying a plate of buckwheat and a glass of tea. All the tables are occupied. The only free place to be had is at the table where Bukharin, Lomov and Dzerzhinsky are sitting.

*Dzerzhinsky.* Come and join us, Vladimir Ilyich.

Lenin joins them. Everyone is in a light-hearted mood. Bukharin is telling jokes.

*Bukharin.* A philosopher and a banker got to talking about life. The philosopher said, "Man has a debt to pay," whereupon the banker corrected him, "Man has debts to pay."

Everyone laughs. *Kollontai* joins them.

*Lenin.* I've been surrounded...

*Bukharin (mischievously).* Join our side, Vladimir Ilyich...

*Lenin.* Guess I don't have much choice...

*Bukharin.* After all, there's almost no difference in what we say and think.

*Lenin.* That's true, we agree 90 per cent of the time. All we differ on is the "s", like the philosopher and the banker.

*Bukharin.* Then what we have to do is to determine what that 90 per cent is, since it evidently includes indisputable truths that don't trouble you, or us. Take this glass for instance. (*He picks up an empty glass and puts it in the middle of the table.*) What is it? On the one hand, it's a vessel, a vessel for drinking. On the other, it's a cylinder of glass.



And no matter how much you and I argue, no matter how much we bicker it will still be a vessel for drinking and a cylinder of glass. The same thing goes for Brest. On the one hand, it's a deal with German imperialism, and on the other, a heavy blow to the German revolution.

*Lenin (inwardly laughing).* Since Nikolai Ivanovich has drawn the sword of dialectics, then all that remains is for me to thank him for choosing a weapon I am somewhat familiar with, pick up the glove and explain in simple terms the difference between the dialectic and eclectic methods. And so, we have a glass. (*He quickly drinks his tea, by now cold, and puts the glass next to Bukharin's.*) It is, indeed, a vessel for drinking and a cylinder of glass, but that's not all. Besides these two definitions, it has an endless number of other definitions, aspects, properties and relationships both direct and indirect with the surrounding world. Isn't that so, Felix Edmundovich?

*Dzerzhinsky (hesitantly, suspecting a trick):* Yes...

*Lenin.* This glass can be thrown at someone's head, say... What do you think, Georgy Ippolitovich?

*Lomov (smiling).* It can.

*Lenin.* See, one of Bukharin's closest allies, Comrade Lomov, thinks that a glass can be an object for throwing. And can't this glass be put on top of a pile of papers? It can. Voilà, a paperweight. Can a butterfly be caught and put under the glass? Yes. And if this were made of cut Venetian glass? Then it would be art, regardless of whether it could be used as a vessel for drinking or was cylindrical in shape. Do you agree, Alexandra Mikhailovna?

*Kollontai.* Yes.

*Lenin.* See, Kollontai agrees with that. Let's go on. If I need to drink out of this it makes no difference to me whether it is made of glass or is cylindrical in shape. What's most important is that it shouldn't have any cracks or chips on the rim so I won't cut my lip. If, however, I want to keep a butterfly under it, cracks and chips don't make any difference. Formal logic, which has been mastered by Bukharin and anybody else who studied with some degree of diligence in the *gymnasium*, takes formal definitions, the superficial, the ordinary, the most obvious and contents itself with that. How did Bukharin come up with this classic example of eclectic definition? He took two different properties and arbitrarily linked them—a vessel for drinking and a cylinder of glass. Dialectical logic, though, demands

that we go further. If you want to know an object study it in all its aspects, its relationships, both direct and indirect, consider the development and dynamics of the object, etc., etc. If we approach the glass and Brest in this way we'll reach some very interesting conclusions. But I don't want to deprive Bukharin or the rest of you of the satisfaction of doing this fascinating analysis yourselves. Thank you very much for your company. Have a nice lunch. (*He quickly rises and hurries out of the dining hall.*)

*Dzerzhinsky (admiringly).* How about the Old Man! Brilliant, wasn't he?

Everyone joins him in laughing happily. Spotlight on the Chorus. *Gorky rises.*

*Gorky.* The Bolshevik gentlemen have a legitimate right to term my behaviour as they please, but I should remind them that the outstanding qualities of the Russian people have never blinded me... Vile conduct has to be exposed whenever it rears its ugly head, and if our peasant is an animal we have to say so... If a worker says, "I am a member of the proletariat!" in the same disgusting, snobbish tone the nobleman uses when he says, "I am a member of the gentry!", that worker has to be ridiculed mercilessly. Now, when a certain segment of the working mass displays the attitudes and ways of a caste, employing violence and terror, all at the bidding of the *comrades*, it goes without saying that I can no longer march with that segment of the working class. And on the day when the despotism of a semi-literate mass celebrates its easy victory and the individual remains as oppressed as always I will not join in the *festivities*. To me it is no cause for celebration, Citizen Stalin. I am particularly suspicious, particularly sceptical, when yesterday's slave comes to power. As soon as he gets a chance to be his neighbour's master he becomes the most unbridled of despots.

*Blok rises from the Chorus.*

*Blok.* Everything that comes of illiteracy and ignorance is loathsome, albeit understandable. And the slavish mentality is, to my mind, the most horrible legacy of the Russian revolution. "Squeezing the slave out of man", to quote Anton Chekhov, is precisely what we want, precisely what we have dreamed of! How can we not lend a hand? Why stand in

the way? After all, we, the Russian intelligentsia, will be to blame if things do not go smoothly for the Bolsheviks. Finally, is it wise to put the splendid word "comrade" in quotation marks. You can hear that sneering tone from any shopkeeper nowadays.

The scene is Bukharin's apartment. Nadezhda Mikhailovna *Lukina* reclines in a deep armchair, a plaid blanket over her knees. She is 28 years old. *Krupskaya* is seated next to her.

*Krupskaya*. The Lafargues lived about twenty versts from Paris. We took our bicycles there. They weren't active any more since they were getting on, and they lived there year round. They greeted us very graciously. Volodya sat down to discuss his book on philosophy with Lafargue, and Laura took me for a walk in the park. I was terribly nervous — I mean, Marx's daughter! — and I kept stealing looks at her, trying to see a likeness. I was horribly flustered, mumbled a thing or two and she graciously replied but the conversation never got off the ground. When we returned a philosophical discussion was in full swing. Laura nodded in the direction of her husband and told me, "Soon he'll show how sincere his philosophical convictions are." She and Paul exchanged a strange look. I didn't understand it at the time. Later on... when they committed suicide I realised what those words and that look had meant. Old age had come, the strength needed for the fight was gone and there you are... Their death made a big impression on Ilyich. He told me, "If you can't do anything more for the party you have to look the truth straight in the eye and die like the Lafargues did." Now Nadya, why are your eyes shining like that? Do you think I don't understand why you asked me about the Lafargues? There's no similarity whatsoever. Can you write?

Lukina nods.

Can you teach?

Lukina nods.

Can you help Nikolai? Can you read his manuscripts? What are you thinking of?

*Lukina*. Nadezhda Konstantinovna, he's just 29 years old... he's still young ... and I'm a cripple ... this just came out of the blue ... and it'll get a lot worse... I'm afraid of being

a burden to him. I start arguing with him about Brest and work myself up to the point where I say things to hurt him and make him feel bad, but he sees right through me. He starts to laugh and tease me and tells me, "Come on, Vladimir Ilyich says the same thing, only worse."

*Krupskaya.* They have terrible fights. I hope it doesn't come to a parting of the ways. When they're together I try to make myself scarce, but I can't help overhearing things from time to time.

*Lukina.* Well, when he starts to tease me my resolve melts away. But later, especially at night, I'm consumed by the thought that I'm a burden to him and he doesn't want to accept that.

*Krupskaya.* You know, Nadya, you and I and our husbands were all brought up on the same books. How could he act any other way with a clear conscience?

Enter *Kollontai*.

*Kollontai.* I've been thrown out of the kitchen. They want to do it all themselves.

*Lukina.* Comrades, comrades, you don't have to do all this!

*Kollontai.* Shh, Nadezhda. You don't have any say in this. We're going to have a real feast! We got a hold of some English tea, sugar, lemons and even something resembling a cake. And what cooks! A trio of virtuosos — Ilyich, Felix and Sverdlov. They've created havoc in the kitchen, under my direction, true. Frankly, I didn't think they knew how to do anything and wanted to send them out here, but I certainly was wrong—they're real chefs.

*Krupskaya.* What do you expect after all those years underground?

*Kollontai.* And Sverdlov assured me he knows an especially marvelous way of brewing tea. Then all three of them burst into laughter and pushed me out the door.

A voice singing a triumphal march is heard and then the singer, *Dzerzhinsky*, appears. *Lenin* and *Sverdlov* are right behind. They are carrying all the tea things, and quickly arrange them on a table.

*Lukina.* Comrades, comrades, you really didn't have to do this, Nikolai and I have everything we need...

*Lenin.* Nadya, I assure you, you've never had tea as fragrant as this!

*Dzerzhinsky.* The secret lies in bringing the water up to the critical temperature of one hundred degrees.

*Lukina (credulously).* Is that when bubbles begin to appear?

*Sverdlov.* Much simpler than that: we just used more tea leaves.

The sound of a door opening and someone running down a long hall is heard.

*Lukina (frightened).* It's him! Something's happened...

Enter *Bukharin*, pale with excitement. He is carrying a pile of papers and tickertapes.

*Bukharin (voice breaking).* Comrades! Vladimir Ilyich! Revolution! In Germany! (*He rushes over to Lenin, hugs him and bursts into tears.*)

*Lenin (reads the telegrams in an agitated voice).* Austria and Germany... Mass strikes... A Soviet of Workers' Deputies formed in Berlin... Vienna, too... Armed clashes in the streets of Berlin and Vienna... Yes, comrades, the revolution has begun there.

*Lukina (agitated, rising).* "Arise, ye starvelings, from your slumbers..."

Everyone joins in "The Internationale". The anthem is taken up by the Chorus, where excitement reigns, too. Red banners appear from somewhere. There is general hugging and cries of "Hurray!"

*Bukharin (to the audience).* The flames of world revolution burn brighter! The German proletariat has risen! A Soviet of Workers' Deputies in Berlin! Capitalism must succumb! The triumph of an honest peace is assured! Long live the international proletarian revolution! Long live the international proletarian republic of Soviets! Workers of all countries, unite!

*Poet (to the audience).*

*We gazed into the distance, waiting,  
Hoping for a light to call our own.  
We walked in darkness unabating.*



*We walked alone.  
But trusting that soon the dawn would break,  
Trusting our hearts would surge one and all,  
We waited for our brothers to wake  
And heed our call!  
And now the horizon is aflame,  
Aglow from fires like our own.  
Friends, we did not wage the fight in vain.  
We're not alone! We're not alone.*

Kollontai goes over to Lenin.

*Kollontai.* See, wouldn't we have been a fine bunch if we'd listened to you and signed a treaty.

*Lenin.* Yes, we would have. We could have taken advantage of the respite it would have given us and the German revolution would have cancelled the treaty.

*Kollontai.* Well, what are we going to do now?

*Lenin.* Break the talks off if everything's confirmed, but in the meantime, drag them out.

*Kollontai.* So Bukharin was right? Right that his assessment of the situation in Germany was closer to the mark than yours? Right that his readiness to take a risk was justified by the events now?

*Lenin.* My dear Alexandra Mikhailovna, if the credit for predicting that the revolution in Germany would start today goes to Bukharin, or the Lord God himself for that matter, all honour and glory to him for his precognition! What place does pride have when revolution has broken out there? Are we erecting monuments to ourselves?

*Kollontai.* So, what are we going to do?

The scene in Lenin's study.

*Lenin (entering the study).* Liebknecht answered that question: if the circumstances can change in 24 hours, tactics can change in 24 hours... (*Suddenly.*) Alexandra Mikhailovna, what if it's not revolution? What if it's not revolution? What if the reporters are exaggerating? I mean we have so little to go on, practically nothing...

*Kollontai.* You think that's possible?

*Lenin.* No, no, I'm starting to question actual events. I can't do that, damn it!

*Kollontai.* Vladimir Ilyich, take it easy...

*Lenin.* I can't do anything with myself: I know so little, so little...

*Enter Bukharin, Lomov and Dzerzhinsky.*

*Lomov.* Vladimir Ilyich, it's time to act. We must break off the talks in Brest immediately and resume military operations.

*Lenin.* Thinking that the only way we can help the German revolution is by waging war is like thinking that the only way of achieving the dictatorship of the proletariat is by an armed uprising. But we don't think that, do we?

*Dzerzhinsky (exploding).* While you're busy making fun of us and giving us a political science lecture, the German revolution, which we can save, is being put in front of a firing squad in Berlin. We need to make a decision, not sarcastic remarks.

*Lenin.* How can we save it?

*Bukharin.* At least at the price of our own demise.

*Lenin.* Yes, Comrade Bukharin, you're absolutely right, if it really is the revolution and not the first signs, that we've blown out of all proportion! If it really is an explosion, if it really is an all-out, nation-wide civil war, if it really is the decisive battle, if they really want our help, if they really are asking for it! Answer all those ifs and then it will be clear to all of us what to do. But not one of you can answer those ifs, because you're all as poorly informed as I am. I'm the wrong person to come to with tactics based on emotions. Get involved just so our consciences won't bother us? I'm sorry, but we won't save the German revolution, and in the process we'll kill off our own. What's more, our collapse will scare the German proletariat away from socialism, just like the English were scared when the Paris Commune was smashed. Is that what you want? We have helped the German revolution and we will keep on helping it — with our lives, example, agitation, fraternisation, the publication of secret treaties and if necessary with our blood!

*Kollontai.* And now it isn't necessary?

*Lenin is silent.*

*Dzerzhinsky.* You're just afraid of taking a risk. But politics isn't algebra, there isn't a formula for everything. Sometimes you have to take a risk.

*Lenin.* I am afraid. I could risk anything except our revolution.

*Trotsky* walks over to the telegraph stage right. It comes on.

*Trotsky (dictating).* Lenin, Petrograd. I was unable to communicate with you earlier due to problems with the direct wire created by the Germans. Events in Germany have been terribly exaggerated by our press. There neither is nor was any revolution in Germany. There has only been a sharp turn, a positive development, the start of a revolution and no more. The uprising has been brutally crushed. A military party headed by Hindenburg and Ludendorff has come to power in Germany. General Hoffmann, now the *de facto* head of the talks, is planning to issue the Bolsheviks what amounts to an ultimatum this evening. The enormous territorial demands we informed you of earlier remain unchanged. They will ask for a categorical reply. Please let us know your thoughts on the substance of the German ultimatum. We will present our final response this evening. Its substance must be made known to the whole world. Please take the necessary steps. *Trotsky.*

*Stalin* and *Sverdlov* have entered the study. Silence reigns as all read *Trotsky's* message.

*Bukharin.* If we had joined the fight in time, this would not have happened. (*He exits.*)

No one reacts to *Bukharin's* words, all are dispirited.

Only *Lenin* gazes after him at length. *Kollontai* and *Lomov* exit silently.

*Dzerzhinsky* goes over to *Lenin*.

*Dzerzhinsky.* We should not have gotten involved, of course. You were absolutely right. Even though I don't share your views on the other questions, the truth has to be faced. Yes.

*Lenin (after a pause).* Have you ever thought about the fact that when the best qualities are taken too far — readiness to take up arms, burning hatred for the bourgeoisie, a sense of internationalism — they are dialectically transformed into their antithesis?

*Dzerzhinsky.* I'll think about it.

*Lenin.* You were depressed about something yesterday. I didn't have a chance to ask you about it.

*Dzerzhinsky.* We arrested that bandit who calls himself Prince Eboli. He was using a false Cheka ID to rob apartments and harass people. I ordered that he be shot. The first time I've sentenced anyone to death.

*Lenin (after a pause).* Felix Edmundovich, I know you are a splendid proletarian Jacobin and I have complete faith in you.

*Dzerzhinsky.* I appreciate that. (*He exits.*)

*Lenin (to Sverdlov).* "Final response" — that means peace, doesn't it?

*Sverdlov.* Of course! Here, he tells us to inform the world. Asks for our thoughts, wants to know whether our position has changed since you two spoke. He'll sign today for sure. We won, Vladimir Ilyich! Do you realise how many things we'll be able to get off the ground now?

*Lenin.* You're probably right. (*He picks up the telephone.*) Ten, please... Would you please get the direct wire ready. We'll be right there... Yes, yes...

*Stalin (to Sverdlov).* The Old Man insisted on having it his way... and he was right. Like I always say, if you don't have a dog, make the cat bark.

*Sverdlov.* That cat of yours, Koba, is turning into a whole philosophy. The Romans said, *non omnia possumus* — we cannot do everything, not everything is possible.

*Stalin.* You know me, Andrei, I'm never at a loss for words: "Let this cup pass from me."

*Lenin (putting down the phone).* We really do have to get ready for the arrival of Trotsky's telegram. I'm going to wait up for the transmission on the direct wire. Yakov Mikhailovich, have the Tsarskoye Selo radio station broadcast it as soon as we get it. We should hold the presses on tomorrow's newspapers, or *Pravda* at least...

*Sverdlov.* I'll get right on it.

*Lenin.* Stalin and I are going to the direct wire.

They walk over to the telegraph stage left.

(*To the telegraph operator.*) Send this message: Trotsky, Brest-Litovsk. You know our position: it has only been strengthened of late. We are waiting for your chief communication. Lenin.

Enter Trotsky.

*Trotsky (aside).* The session is beginning. So what is holding me back? There is the decision of the Central Committee which I am bound to act on. There are the categorical instructions Lenin as the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars gave me and just confirmed; I'm bound to act on them, too. There is the promise I gave to him that I would sign a treaty in the event of a German ultimatum. And there are facts, here and now, which shape my deep conviction that we do not need to sign a treaty, and that the best position today is neither peace nor war. Yes, I gave my word, but I gave it almost two weeks ago. I am certain, convinced that the Germans will not attack. They will listen and consent... They have to keep a lot of troops in Berlin since strikes and demonstrations could break out at any moment... Don't forget the immense impact this position will have on mankind. Neither peace nor war! Wonderful! It sounds like a slogan. That phrase will go in all the textbooks of modern history. The revolution means a new kind of diplomacy addressed primarily to peoples, not governments. No, I've made up my mind. (*He moves downstage to the apron.*) Gentlemen of the Brest-Litovsk Peace Conference, the time has come for decisions. Nations are asking when we shall see the end of this unparalleled destruction of man by his own hand, brought on by the self-interest and lust for power of the ruling classes everywhere. They are asking when we shall see the end of this struggle to divide up the world. We do not wish to participate further in this purely imperialistic war, where the claims of the "haves" are paid with human blood. We are equally irreconcilable to the imperialists of both camps and can no longer consent to spill the blood of our soldiers to protect the interests of one imperialist camp against the other. In anticipation of the hour we hope is close at hand, when the oppressed labouring classes of all countries will take power into their hands, as the labouring people of Russia have, we are pulling our army and our people out of the war. Our peasant-soldier should return to his ploughing so that this spring will find him peacefully tilling the land the revolution transferred from the hands of the landowner to the hands of the peasant. Our worker-soldier should return to his factory to produce the tools of creation, not destruction, and together with the peasant build a new socialist economy. At the same time we declare that the terms put forward



by the governments of Germany and Austria-Hungary are in radical contradiction with the interests of all peoples. We refuse to sanction the conditions which the sword of German and Austro-Hungarian imperialism is carving on the bodies of living nations. We cannot put the signatures of the Russian delegation to terms that would bring oppression, grief and unhappiness to millions of human beings. The governments of Germany and Austria-Hungary claim lands and peoples as their right by virtue of seizure. Let them commit their deeds openly. We cannot sanctify coercion. (*To the telegraph operator.*) Comrade, please send this telegram to Petrograd. (*He hands over the telegram.*)

The telegraphs stage left and right come on.

In conjunction with the above I am delivering the following written and signed proclamation to the joint allied delegations: "In the name of the Council of People's Commissars, the Government of the Russian Republic hereby informs the Governments and Peoples of the belligerent and neutral countries that, while it refuses to sign an annexationist treaty, Russia, for its part, declares the state of war with Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey and Bulgaria to be at an end. Russia's troops are being issued demobilisation orders simultaneously along the entire front. L. Trotsky, A. Ioffe, M. Pokrovsky, A. Bitsenko, V. Karelin."

Lenin (*wadding up the telegram, dispirited*). What about your word, Comrade Trotsky?

Spotlight on the Chorus which is excited, agitated. Here and there happy cries of "Peace! Peace!" go up. A *general* rises.

*General*. Lenin, the Smolny, Petrograd. Trotsky's proclamation is being regarded by the army as a *de facto* peace settlement. Krylenko's demobilisation order, confirming Trotsky's proclamation has been received. Confusion has been created by the fact that the peace negotiations have been broken off without an agreement being reached, but the order speaks of the end of the war and demobilising all the armies. Demobilisation is occurring spontaneously. As the army has ceased to exist for all practical purposes, and it is impossible to comprehend any part of the central authority's actions, I am informing you that the General

Headquarters of the High Command has been disbanded and I herewith resign as Chief of Staff. General Bonch-Bruyevich.

The scene is Lenin's study. *Lenin* and *Sverdlov* are on stage, *Stalin* arrives somewhat later. Enter *Trotsky*, back from Brest.

*Trotsky*. Comrade Lenin...

*Lenin*. I think it would be best to talk about what the government is going to do next. So, Comrade Trotsky, if you would please tell us...

*Trotsky*. Vladimir Ilyich, the situation in Brest did not permit any other course of action. The workers of France and England now trust us completely and will not allow their governments to intervene.

*Lenin*. Comrade Trotsky, Yakov Mikhailovich and I both realise you had some rationale for your decision. But you could have refrained from playing these, shall we say, less than honest games with us. You could not have sent that final telegram where you requested our opinion, though you knew full well what you would do an hour later...

*Trotsky*. Vladimir Ilyich!

*Lenin*. What you did was, how shall I put it, dishonorable, perhaps... It is inexcusable to take that kind of attitude towards members of the same government, and in general ... to people... Which is to say nothing of the way members of the same party, comrades, should treat each other, if, of course, they really are comrades.

*Trotsky*. Vladimir Ilyich!

*Lenin*. But I'm being emotional. Only time will tell whether that was a brilliant tactical move, as you think, or a monstrous example of adventurism, a *de facto* betrayal of the interests of the revolution and a present to Wilhelm and his generals, as I believe.

*Trotsky*. I am still convinced that we got out of the war...  
(Exits.)

*Sverdlov*. Lev Davidovich should give an account of himself to the All-Russia Central Executive Committee ... and the Committee will make a decision.

*Lenin*. He started out so well in Brest. He used the opportunity it provided for spreading our ideas so well, and we all concurred with him then. And now this breach of faith, this slamming of the door, these histrionics...

*Stalin*. Vladimir Ilyich, you yourself said that only time will tell. What if...

*Lenin.* Exactly, "what if"? We don't have any other choice than to put our faith in "what if".

*Sverdlov.* Let's pass this resolution on Trotsky's report: "Having heard the report by the delegation to the peace talks and discussed it, the All-Russia Central Executive Committee fully approves the line of action taken by its representatives in Brest."

*Stalin.* If we do that he'll think he won. Well, I don't know what you'd call a defeat then. On the other hand, Don Quixote of blessed memory thought he was the victor when the windmill sails struck him.

*Sverdlov.* Two days ago you thought that Trotsky's position offered a way out of the crisis.

*Stalin.* That was a buffer position that kept us from a split and I supported it up to a point. But when Trotsky went too far I turned my back on him.

*Lenin.* All right. We'll adopt that resolution. We don't have any other choice. Formally he acted in accordance with the decision of the Central Committee and the Council of People's Commissars. We won't let the public and the Germans know about our differences. That wouldn't be of any help now.

The telephone rings.

Hello? Fire him immediately! No! No! Absolutely not! Tell him that I have no desire to speak with him! (*He hangs up.*)

*Stalin.* What happened, Vladimir Ilyich?

*Lenin.* It's my secretary. You know, Sidorenko. He had a few too many and started shouting that he was Lenin's secretary.

*Stalin.* Is that anything to get so upset about? You've turned white.

*Lenin.* It is. I liked his eyes—he seemed like a good man. I hate that vile philosophy that divides people into "slaves" and "masters", the common and the elect. It will be a blight on us for a long, long time to come if we don't put it behind us once and for all ... and if we don't encourage it, of course!

*Dzerzhinsky* enters and wordlessly places a telegram before Lenin. *Trotsky* immediately enters the study. A *general* rises from the Chorus.

*General.* Lenin & Trotsky, the Smolny, Petrograd. At 7:30 p. m. today General Hoffmann officially informed me that the armistice concluded with the Russian Republic will end at noon on February 18 and the state of war will recommence. General Samoilo, Military Consultant of the Russian Delegation.

Lenin starts to pace his study nervously. Trotsky watches him, waiting for the explosion.

*Sverdlov.* I'll go call the Central Committee together.  
(Exits.)

Exit Dzerzhinsky and Stalin.

*Lenin.* Well, you've performed your experiment. Are you happy?

*Trotsky.* No, Vladimir Ilyich, the experiment isn't finished yet. This is all just words. We have to let Hoffmann actually attack us.

*Lenin.* What do you mean? (He is stunned, cannot believe what he is hearing.) You want to keep on playing? That will mean the loss of Dvinsk, the loss of people, guns... What's the point?

*Trotsky.* Of course it means more losses. But the German soldier has to actually enter Russian territory in combat. German and British and French workers have to hear about it. Hear about the reality, not simply the danger...

*Lenin.* Have you thought about the fact that now you're operating with real human lives, not abstract concepts? Have you thought about the fact that for every minute you and I drag our feet, the people are paying for the delay with freshly-dug graves?

*Trotsky.* Vladimir Ilyich, when you put it that way...

*Lenin (furiously):* Yes, I put it that way! That's the only way it can be put! You may not realise that any further delays will mean the death of the revolution, but I do!

*Trotsky.* If we've undertaken this experiment, we have got to see it through!

*Lenin.* Oh, no, you're the one who undertook this experiment, Comrade Trotsky. You presented us with the

*fait accompli*, even though you gave me your word, and now you don't want to see how the experiment has ended! You don't want to face facts.

*Trotsky*. I don't see any facts!

*Lenin (holding out the ticker tape)*. What's this?

*Trotsky*. Just paper! What did we make all this fuss for then? Only an actual German attack will give us the answers to our questions.

*Lenin (restraining himself)*. All right. The first time you came back from the talks, I asked you, "What if the Germans resume the war?" You said, "Then we'll be compelled to sign a treaty." What is keeping you from doing that now? Wounded pride? Come on, Comrade Trotsky, a politician doesn't think about his pride when he has the fate of millions in his hands.

*Trotsky*. I will overlook the tone you are talking with me, Comrade Lenin, and tell you that we were speaking of an actual attack by the German army, not a verbal ultimatum.

*Lenin*. So you need casualties? Otherwise, you won't believe in the reality of a German attack?

*Trotsky*. That's a demagogic statement!

*Lenin*. That's a plain statement of fact.

*Trotsky (trying to avoid giving an answer)*. When it comes right down to it, why believe this telegram? I'm sure it's German provocation. I'm going to go on the radio and issue a protest right now!

*Lenin*. You want to go? All right... We really don't have anything more to say to one another. We'll discuss this at the Central Committee meeting.

One after another, the members of the Central Committee enter the room, take their seats and read Samoilo's telegram.

*Sverdlov*. Comrade Trotsky, have you looked over the decree on the creation of an army? Vladimir Ilyich wants me to ask all the members of the Central Committee and the Council of People's Commissars if they have any comments or additions to make.

*Trotsky*. Just one. (*He pulls the decree out of his pocket.*) There have to be sanctions if you're going to build an army. You can't lead masses of people to their deaths if the commanders don't have capital punishment at their disposal. We have to present the soldier with a choice between



the possibility of death in front and the inevitability of death behind.

*Sverdlov.* We won't be able to build an army on fear. But I'll pass your thoughts on to Vladimir Ilyich.

*Dzerzhinsky.* Aeroplanes have appeared over Dvinsk. An attack on Revel is expected. Four divisions have been transferred to our front from the Western front in France. The Germans have announced over the radio that they will protect the civilised world from the contagion from the East.

*Sverdlov.* Comrades, I open this meeting of the Central Committee. I propose that we limit our discussion to the question of whether or not we will send a telegram agreeing to peace on yesterday's terms. Arguments for and against the proposal may be made. Then we will decide. Speaking in opposition to sending a telegram is Trotsky.

*Trotsky.* Comrades, the masses are only just beginning to ponder what is happening. Signing a peace treaty now would only sow confusion in our ranks. The same could be said about the Germans, who suppose that we were just waiting for their ultimatum. Maybe they were counting on a psychological effect. We must wait and see how the German working class reacts to all this. In Germany the end of the war was greeted with jubilation and it's not inconceivable that a German attack will cause a revolutionary explosion there. I stress that we need to wait and see what the effect will be and then propose peace if the Germans don't propose it themselves.

*Lenin.* I am categorically in favour of sending a telegram now, without delay, while there is still time. Enough of these suppositions, enough of these fantasies. We have to choose a course of action based on the facts, and they are not pleasant. The Germans are about to attack, not so much to resolve territorial issues as to overthrow Soviet government. Think about that. If we don't take action we'll be signing our own death warrant.

*Sverdlov.* Let's vote. All those in favour of sending a telegram... Lenin, Sverdlov, Smilga, Zinoviev, Stasova, Sokolnikov. Six. All those against... Trotsky, Dzerzhinsky, Bukharin, Ioffe, Uritsky, Lomov, Krestinsky. Seven. The motion has been defeated by one vote. We'll wait and see how events develop.

*Lenin.* And perhaps watch our revolution be destroyed. *(He leaves the study.)*

*Sverdlov.* Please don't leave, comrades. It is now 12 o'clock. As soon as the first telegrams come in we will continue this meeting.

The members of the Central Committee rise from their seats, gather in small groups and converse quietly. Some go in and out. *Lenin* walks onto the apron, where *Sverdlov* joins him.

*Lenin (to Sverdlov).* Maybe it's time? Time to go to the masses and spell things out. Call adventurism adventurism, and irresponsibility irresponsibility!

*Sverdlov.* Vladimir Ilyich, the Central Committee has made its decision...

*Lenin.* But maybe the time has come to dispense with the niceties? You and I have kept silent and said nothing to the masses while a policy we can see is disastrous has been sanctified by our names. So isn't it time to clear things up? Nothing can stop me! We'll go to the sailors, to the soldiers, to the workers, to the people! We'll appeal to the party! The interests of the revolution are law! I don't want anyone to ever say that revolutionary phrase-making about a revolutionary war destroyed the Russian revolution!

*Sverdlov.* Vladimir Ilyich...

Enter *Robins*.

This is the allies' representative, Colonel *Robins*.

*Lenin.* We've met. Hello, Colonel. We're in recess now, so you and I can talk. Please.

Exit *Sverdlov*.

Which language would you prefer?

*Robins.* I'm sorry, but...

*Lenin.* Fine, we'll speak English, but I hope you'll be patient with me. What can I do for you?

*Robins.* Does Trotsky's statement mean that a peace settlement has been made with Germany? If not, to what extent would assistance from the allies induce you to fight Germany?

*Lenin.* Last time you told me that you'd recommended to your government that it give us *de facto* recognition. Have you received any reply?

*Robins.* No, not yet. But I hope you don't doubt my

sincerity, Mr. Lenin, when I say that a step on the part of my government would be in its best interests.

*Lenin.* I don't doubt that what you've just said reflects your personal intentions. However, I am not sure that your personal intentions coincide with the intentions of your government. And now I will answer your questions. We are not at peace with Germany yet. We declared our refusal to sign the onerous, extortionate terms that German imperialism forced on us, and that is all. Will military operations start up again? I think that question is best addressed to the German General Headquarters. Would your aid play a role in our decision-making? No, it wouldn't. Our strategy will be based on what is in the interests of our revolution, and nothing else.

*Robins.* But if the war starts up again?

*Lenin.* We'll accept your aid. We'll cooperate with the allied governments as long as there are no political strings attached. What's more, we're willing to extend that cooperation to the economic sphere in peacetime, too. We think that kind of cooperation would be mutually advantageous.

*Robins.* Russia is such a market! But...

*Lenin.* Yes, there's a "but". Sometimes I think all this talk about aid is just a carrot to lure Russia back into the war with the Germans, that no aid will actually be forthcoming, and the whole idea is to lead Soviet government to its demise.

*Robins.* Oh, no, Mr. Lenin! I am certain that if military operations began it would be a matter of genuine aid. You wouldn't be fighting empty-handed. You'd be backed by Britain, France, Italy and the United States, to say nothing of your own people. With those cards even a less experienced player than you would join the game and play it to his advantage.

*Lenin (smiling, tears five slips of paper from a notebook and spreads them on the palm of his hand).* I'm a politician, not a gambler. But even if I were, I'd never play with cards like these. Four of them are blank... (*He extends four of the slips to Robins.*) That's allied aid. Only one of these is real. It's the support of the workers and peasants of Russia. That's what we're relying on, that's our base.

*Robins (putting the four slips of paper away).* Mr. Lenin, I'm sure that within a week I'll return these pieces of paper to you covered with words and figures. Thank you

for seeing me. I don't want to take up any more of your time. (*They shake hands. Robins exits.*)

Spotlight on the Chorus. Here and there members stand up.

*Commissar.* Lenin & Krylenko, the Smolny, Petrograd: German forces have attacked. Dvinsk is in the grip of panic. The army is fleeing without offering resistance. The Council of Army Commissars has made the decision to abandon Dvinsk.

*Officer.* Lenin & Krylenko, the Smolny: Part of the 5th Army is making a disorderly retreat to Rezhitsa and Drissa. Three-quarters of the 12th Army, defending the approaches to Petrograd, have deserted their posts and gone to the rear.

*Bolshevik.* Lenin & Krylenko, the Smolny: The front is melting away by the minute. We need peace immediately at any cost. Myasnikov.

The members of the Central Committee take their seats. Telegrams from the front are in their hands.

*Trotsky.* We have to send an inquiry to Berlin and Vienna, find out what it is they want exactly.

*Lenin.* Isn't it clear to you yet?

*Uritsky.* Sending inquiries means putting off a decision and we need to act right away. Nothing could be more detrimental now than to play a waiting game. Either we have to count the votes of Artem and Muranov — they're not here but we know what their stand is — or, on the contrary, those who are in the minority must submit.

*Sverdlov.* And what then? Fight?

*Uritsky.* Yes.

*Lenin (exploding).* The Central Committee decided against a revolutionary war. Now, when we have neither peace nor war, as Trotsky was pleased to term this interesting state of affairs, we are embarking on a revolutionary war with the tacit consent of a number of comrades who are now present! War is no joke! The game is over, Comrade Trotsky, and the revolution will collapse if we stick to your middle position! We can't wait another hour. Waiting means scrapping the revolution! If we send the Germans another inquiry, as Trotsky suggests, all we'll

get back is another piece of paper. That's not policy-making! Proposing peace—that's policy-making! While we're writing pieces of paper they're seizing towns, storehouses, train cars. We are dying! Remember, if we play at war right now we will be handing the Germans our revolution on a platter! We could have signed a treaty that wouldn't have posed the slightest danger to our revolution! But we didn't do that. Now it's too late to sound things out. Even a child can see that the Germans can and will attack.

*Sverdlov.* Have you presented your arguments, Vladimir Ilyich?

*Lenin.* No, that was just a comment. I'll speak last.

*Bukharin.* Comrades, this talk about "playing at war" is simply astonishing. Events are unfolding just as we said they would. And we've simply panicked, lost our heads. We always said that the Russian revolution would either live or die...

*Lenin.* From too much revolutionary phrase-making!

*Bukharin.* I didn't interrupt you, Vladimir Ilyich. We can't put off the battle with world imperialism now. It's openly advancing on us. Even if the imperialists take Petrograd the workers will resist. We haven't exhausted our social capital yet. We can incite the peasants against the Germans. We can do anything. All we have are our old tactics — the tactics of world revolution. And they will lead us to victory.

*Sverdlov.* Lenin has the floor.

Lenin stands, but does not speak for a long time.

Vladimir Ilyich...

*Lenin.* The most frightening thing is that many of us are ignoring the actual state of affairs and sticking to our old positions in the face of everything. I was wrong again. I thought that the facts would have some influence, that they would make certain comrades at least think twice. But no! Trotsky is back to his middle position, back with new hare-brained schemes. Meanwhile, the clock is ticking away our final minutes. Bukharin got up on his revolutionary war hobby horse and now he can't get down without help. It's of no interest to him that the peasants don't want war and won't go fight for us. Since Bukharin needs them to, they will. We can do anything. Everything's easy as pie, like in the song, "Bomb 'n' bullets don't scare a Russian



soldier none, they're his buddies, every one." They say the Germans will take Latvia and Estonia in the event of peace. All right, we can give that to them in the name of ensuring the Russian revolution will live. They'll demand that we pull out of Finland. Fine, let them take revolutionary Finland.

Stirring among the members of the Central Committee.

Yes, it's a terrible, bitter pill to swallow, but we must do it. We must cede territory to the *de facto* victor to gain time. The revolution will not be lost if we give up Finland, Estonia and Latvia. What will we gain for Finland's self-determination if the revolution is lost?

*Bukharin.* A clear conscience!

*Lenin.* We will gain the profound and justified certainty of the proletariat the world over that the Russian revolution was led by a bunch of dummies who let what was most important slip through their fingers for the sake of appearances. That's all. Nothing else. I move that we send the Germans a telegram immediately stating that we're agreed to peace.

*Sverdlov.* Let's vote. All those in favour of Lenin's proposal... Lenin, Smilga, Sverdlov, Sokolnikov, Zinoviev, Stalin and Trotsky. All those against... Bukharin, Uritsky, Lomov, Ioffe, Krestinsky. Seven votes in favour of the motion, five against, six counting Dzerzhinsky. And Stasova abstains.

*Lenin.* Now the question is will the Germans agree? (*Exits.*)

Spotlight on the Chorus. *A German general* rises.

*German general.* Events are taking their course. The Russian Army is much more demoralised than we had supposed. Nobody wants to fight any more. Yesterday a lieutenant and six soldiers took 630 Cossacks prisoner. Hundreds of cannons, locomotives and train cars, several thousand prisoners, and dozens of division headquarters have been captured without a fight. Today a courier arrived with a letter from the Bolsheviks agreeing to peace. But we will not stop until we have reached Lake Peipus.

*Gorky* and two members of the *Novaya Zhizn* staff, *Sukhanov* and *Stroyev*, rise from the Chorus.

*Gorky.* Sukhanov, please read the last paragraph one more time. Would you mind listening, too, Stroyev?

*Sukhanov (reading).* "It would be possible to accept the loss of the revolution: that would mean the body had died but the spirit lived, offering its true interests in sacrifice. The honour of the revolution would be preserved and defeat would not be so terrible to contemplate. But our blinded, panic-stricken rulers have not done what is their outright duty. History will not vindicate them. However people today must think not of the future but of saving themselves. The matter of a peace settlement is not the only instance in which the Soviet government has demonstrated its bankruptcy. It long ago did everything it could to ensure that its policies would undermine the remaining pillars of the revolution. Liquidating the existing government of all-encompassing disintegration and disgrace, and replacing it with a government capable of working and defending the revolution should be the top priority for all conscious democracy."

*Stroyev.* Fantastic!

*Gorky (shaking his head).* It amounts to a call to overthrow the Council of People's Commissars, right?

*Sukhanov.* In so many words!

*Gorky.* All the more reason to think it's going too far. Don't you agree? We're overplaying our hand?

*Sukhanov.* It's where our efforts logically lead, Alexei Maksimovich. And it's the only constructive platform today.

*Gorky.* I don't think so.

*Sukhanov.* You're wavering?

*Gorky.* Yes, I am. I'm not sure it's the right thing to do. Especially presented as the opinion of the editors. Moreover...

*Sukhanov (offended).* Fine, I'll attribute it to myself. *(Exits.)*

*Gorky (after a pause).* What's the news, Stroyev?

*Stroyev (gleefully).* Everything is coming apart at the seams! The Germans are advancing on Pskov! Rumour has it they'll try to break through to Petrograd tomorrow if not today.

*Gorky (practically screaming).* How dare you rejoice? How can you? Have you taken even a second to try and imagine what will happen if they break through? So you think the Kaiser is better than Lenin? If that's so, you're not a socialist! If that's so, what are we doing

working together? (*He is overcome by a fit of coughing and sits down*).

*A worker rises from the Chorus.*

*Worker.* Lenin, the Smolny, Petrograd: After a thorough discussion of the situation, the working class of Konovalovsky district has come to the following heartrending decision: for peace — 44, against — 31.

The scene is Lenin's study. *Lenin* and *Sverdlov* are bent over a map.

*Sverdlov.* They're continuing to advance. Our units in Narva and Pskov have resisted heroically, but...

*Lenin.* It's the prototype of the army we'll have. Some day that army will astound the world, but now it's a drop in the bucket.

*Sverdlov.* The threat to Petrograd is real and it's growing by the hour. We've printed up copies of the "Socialist Fatherland is in Danger" decree and are distributing them to the districts.

*Lenin.* If we don't do our damndest to pull this together we'll be out on our ear. We have to add to the decree that Petrograd is under a state of siege. Bring all the tsarist generals who are under arrest in the Peter and Paul Fortress to the Smolny and offer them the chance to help defend the city. Let's raise all the workers and soldiers of Petrograd by nightfall.

*Sverdlov.* Gorky printed an article in *Novaya Zhizn* today openly calling for the overthrow of the Soviet government.

*Lenin.* He picked a good time. Signed by the editors?

*Sverdlov.* No, Sukhanov.

*Lenin.* Well, Sukhanov's article is the logical culmination of Gorky's whole line. He certainly won't enjoy the memory of this later on. Close the paper and put Sukhanov on trial! Have Lunacharsky write an article about Gorky. Right now. In spirit and background he's a proletarian writer. The only way he can exist is as a proletarian writer. Don't gloss anything over, but leave the door open. On the great day for the peoples of the world when victory is ours, the figure most welcome at the celebrations will be Gorky. When can we expect an answer from the Germans?

*Sverdlov (looks at his watch).* Any time now.

*Lenin.* They won't hurry.

*Sverdlov.* You haven't slept for two nights.

*Lenin.* I'll get a breath of fresh air soon. That'll wake me up.

Exit Sverdlov. Lenin goes over to the telegraph that has come on stage left and reads the reports as they come over the wire. Red strobe lights fall on the Chorus and a familiar melody is heard. The *gentleman in tails* appears along with an enormous rug representing the face of a clock against which women are posed.

*Gentleman in tails.* Life goes on, ladies and gentlemen! We'll be optimistic and brush up the German we learned as children. Time is working in our favour!

The music begins, bringing the women to life. They dance and sing:

*No more inspiration, no more a proud nation,  
Evviva destruction and death!  
Let's drink a cup of tea to this bright reality,  
Russia's great new heaven on earth,  
A tight German yoke, a revolt that's a joke  
Are all she can look forward to.  
She's been sold like a bride to the opposite side,  
By folks who are parvenu.  
Who can afford coffee? Just Bronstein and Ioffe.  
The rest of us have to make do.  
Those bright lads are the first to sell Russia, each verst.  
What a remarkable coup!*

*Listen my friends, hear the proud call.  
Tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock...  
We have been nought, we shall be all  
Tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock...*

*A patrol of revolutionary sailors appears.*

*Sailor.* The Socialist Fatherland is in danger!

The patrons of the café chantant run off in all directions, the sailors exit.

*Lenin (to the telegraph operator).* I'll be in my study.  
(*He returns there.*)

*Sidorenko* peeps in. *Bukharin* enters somewhat later.

Come in. Here's what I've come up with (*He picks up a sheet of paper and reads.*) "To Dzerzhinsky: The bearer, *Sidorenko*, was my personal secretary for several days. I was completely satisfied with his work. He was fired for becoming intoxicated and shouting, I am told, that he was 'Lenin's secretary'. *Sidorenko* tells me that he deeply regrets the incident and I am inclined to believe him. He is a young and, I think, very good person. We should be easy on the young. I leave it to you to decide whether he is suited to the position he is being considered for, given these facts. Lenin." Is that all right?

*Sidorenko*. Vladimir Ilyich... (*He takes the recommendation Lenin holds out to him. He wants to say something, but cannot, and leaves.*)

*Bukharin*. I'm ready.

*Lenin*. I'm too tired for a walk. Let's just stay here.

*Bukharin*. All right.

*Lenin* (*after a pause*). Bitter days, Nikolai Ivanovich?

*Bukharin*. I brought you a copy of *Pravda* with your article, "Revolutionary Phrase-Making"... So you decided to make our differences public?

*Lenin*. Yes, it's time to counter your ideas with another point of view. Let the masses choose.

*Bukharin*. You signed it "Karpov". If I recall, that was the name you used before the revolution?

*Lenin*. That's right. (*Pause.*) The allies were here — Robins, Sadoul and Lockhart. They're offering arms if we join the fight.

*Bukharin*. Surely you're not thinking of accepting?

*Lenin*. We'll take them if there are no political strings attached.

*Bukharin* (*sadly*). What are we doing, Vladimir Ilyich? We're dragging the party through the mud, that's what.

*Lenin*. A prude as editor-in-chief of *Pravda*? That's all we need! Perhaps you believe in the virgin birth, too?

*Bukharin*. Someone has to believe in the virgin birth, otherwise anything ... anything can be justified.

*Lenin*. You shouldn't be so thin-skinned. Heaven knows, I've been treated to enough insults for a thousand people. What you need to do is work, not lick your wounds. You keep going on about revolutionary war: what have you actually done to get ready for it? If you'd even started



getting the medical side of operations organised that would have been a help. But you keep on writing resolutions...

Bukharin laughs happily. Lenin looks at him in surprise.

What's so funny?

*Bukharin.* You *are* thinking about war after all, Vladimir Ilyich. That's the main thing. The Left Socialist-Revolutionaries told us the same thing today.

*Lenin.* What did they tell you?

*Bukharin.* Proshian came over today. He said, instead of writing resolutions, wouldn't it be better to arrest Lenin for one night, declare war on the Germans, and then unanimously reelect him Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, because no one would be better at waging war.

*Lenin.* You know, Nikolai Ivanovich, that's not as funny as you think. When people say things like that to you the first thing you have to ask yourself is why they choose to say them to you in particular... That's in the first place. In the second, never tell anyone about that conversation. It's enough that I know.

The distant sound of Petrograd factory sirens is heard.

(*Listening.*) The factories are rising.

*Bukharin.* It's like music. When I hear that and think of the compromises you're urging on us, it makes me want to cry.

*Lenin.* Don't you think you're too prone to tears?

*Bukharin.* Why are you so hard? There's no getting at you. When you calmly said today that we might have to give up revolutionary Finland my blood ran cold. I can't tell you ... there was a lump in my throat...

*Lenin.* Don't give yourself a monopoly on suffering. That's silly. Do you like to hunt? Have you ever gone through a swamp? Then you know that if you march straight ahead you'll wind up in muck up to your ears. Or worse. You have to hop from tussock to tussock. And sometimes they're way over there, off to the side. You're afraid you won't be able to find your way and think you'll have to turn back. Nonsense. You think that because you don't have a compass. But if you do you can go back, to the left and right — it'll get you there no matter what. Of course, if you are all going to parrot Radek...

*Bukharin.* I'm not parroting Radek. I have enough of my own...

*Lenin.* When it comes to outlandish ideas you can give each other competition, and Ryazanov, too, if you join forces. But seriously, you reason about like this: the nature of a revolutionary party precludes compromise. If our party has to compromise, that means it has ceased to be revolutionary.

*Bukharin.* It's going in that direction, unfortunately...

*Lenin.* A character in a book I read demonstrated to his little son, who had taken a piece of sugar without asking, that anyone who committed that act was certainly capable of breaking into a house and murdering his parents and assassinating the emperor!

*Bukharin.* But he did take a piece of sugar, right?

*Lenin.* Ten pieces!

*Bukharin.* Still, Vladimir Ilyich, compromise has a price... That price is amorality, and it eats away at the soul. No matter what you say it's immoral to abandon the Ukrainians, Estonians, Latvians and Finns in their moment of need. It's immoral to buy our own life at the cost of their grief.

*Lenin.* You're right: one of the scales contains the grief of the Ukrainians, Finns and Latvians. But what about the other? Let's hear your answer, moralist! The other contains carnage! The slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Russian workers and peasants, who are powerless now to defeat the efficient German war machine. Are you familiar with the moral category of responsibility for the fate of millions of lives? Do you know what the burden of power is? It means being a political realist at all times. It means not letting emotions get the better of you, even though you'd like to send everything to the devil! It means making constant calculations—after all, millions of lives are in your hands...

*Bukharin.* But I can't vote for the gallows for my comrades!

*Lenin.* Do you think I can?! Do you think I can?

*Bukharin.* But surely there's some other way ... that doesn't involve trampling on our principles? Surely there's no need for repulsive methods? (*He bursts into tears.*)

*Lenin.* Come, come, Nikolai Ivanovich. Calm down. It's no easier for me, I assure you. But we have a duty to save the revolution.

*Bukharin.* All right, but if we were strong, would you choose war?

*Lenin.* I'd still choose peace, only it wouldn't cost what it will today.

Exit Bukharin. Lenin gazes after him for a long time. Enter *Krupskaya*.

*Krupskaya.* What's wrong? Did something happen?

*Lenin.* No, nothing. Any news?

*Krupskaya.* The mood in our district has turned about completely. They realise there's no other way. Everyone's guessed that you wrote the article in *Pravda*.

*Lenin.* Nadya, if that Left talk gets the upper hand in the Central Committee again, I'll resign.

*Krupskaya.* What do you mean, Volodya?

*Lenin.* I can't dig the revolution's grave. I gave it my life... All that leftist rhetoric, all those pretty incantations—they're speeches over the revolution's grave. Take part in its funeral—I'm sorry, but I have feelings, too!

*Krupskaya.* Have you tried everything?

*Lenin.* Yes, my back's up against the wall. I'm going to the masses. They'll support me. The masses are sobering up by the minute, while the Left keeps harping on the same old thing. I told you and Inessa that it would be like this, but you didn't believe me. I've made up my mind.

*Krupskaya.* But it'll mean a split.

*Lenin.* Evidently. But there are times when division is a good thing. I've said and done everything I could. Either we sail into the whirlpool with the Left or we cut loose and steer for clear waters. (*Suddenly.*) Damn it, we could use a revolution in Germany right now! But maybe? Maybe it's begun!

*Krupskaya.* What are you talking about, Volodya?!

*Lenin.* Maybe?! Come on!

They exit quickly.

Spotlight on the Chorus. The *German general* rises.

*German general.* A new ultimatum was sent to the Bolsheviks just this morning. I must say that the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the High Command did a good job. The ultimatum contains every demand that could possibly be made. Under the new terms Russia will lose 46 million people, in other words 26 per cent of its population; 75 per cent of its coal; 73 per cent of its pig iron; 37 per cent of its

agricultural yield; 26 per cent of its railroads; etc. The Bolshevik leadership will probably meet to discuss the ultimatum. I seriously doubt they'll accept it, since it has been designed to offend the Bolsheviks so they'll turn it down. Then we'll march on Petersburg and destroy the contagion that threatens the world.

The scene is Lenin's study. Several members of the Central Committee are bent over the German ultimatum.

*Stalin.* So what does it say?

*Bukharin.* The terms are a thousand times worse than the ones before. They want our reply by 7 a. m. tomorrow.

*Lenin* dashes in.

*Sverdlov.* An ultimatum.

*Lenin.* What about Germany? Any news from there?

*Sverdlov.* No change.

One by one, the members of the Central Committee enter and take their seats.

Comrades, our job now, essentially, is to decide the fate of our revolution. I consider it my duty to remind you of this. So, shall we accept these terms or not?

*Bukharin.* Give away half of Russia or not? The question is absurd! It would be better if all of us went out onto the square in front of the Smolny and committed suicide before the workers. At least that would be more honest!

*Sverdlov.* What do you propose?

*Bukharin.* That we mobilise all our forces and let them have it! That's how revolutionaries answer the effrontery of imperialism!

*Lenin (exploding with inconceivable force).* That's enough! That's enough! I won't tolerate another second of this! Enough of these games! Not another second! To wage a revolutionary war you have to have an army. We don't. The revolution needs peace, and we can have it! The policy of revolutionary phrase-making is over! Over, Comrade Bukharin! If this policy continues I will immediately leave the government and the Central Committee and take my case to the masses. But I will not tolerate any more revolutionary rhetoric! That's it! Be so kind as to accept my resignation!

Silence. Everyone is stunned. The silence continues for a long time.

*Trotsky.* Comrades, we have heard Vladimir Ilyich's declaration. What is there to say? I find Vladimir Ilyich's arguments absolutely unconvincing. If we were united we could defend ourselves and deal with this the best way. Other objections could be made to what Vladimir Ilyich has said. But that's not the point. Right now we need maximum unanimity. We don't have that, so for my part I think it would be irresponsible to vote for war.

*Stalin.* I think we can refrain from signing and just go back to the negotiating table.

Lenin shrugs his shoulders in exasperation, but Stalin does not see him.

They've made these demands to provoke us into rejecting them. Since we don't have the military means to halt a German advance, we should take other steps. Either we get a breathing space or the revolution will perish. There's no other option.

*Dzerzhinsky.* We won't get a breathing space; that's just wishful thinking. By signing a treaty we'll just be strengthening the hand of German imperialism. Let's face it, there is no guarantee that new ultimatums won't be made if we sign this treaty. We won't be saving anything by signing this treaty. But I agree with Trotsky that if the party was strong enough to overcome its disarray and Lenin's resignation we could make a decision. Not any more.

*Lenin.* I can see that some of you reproach me for my ultimatum. I would only make it under dire circumstances. These are dire circumstances. Stalin is absolutely wrong when he says that we can refrain from signing. A settlement on these terms must be signed. If you don't you'll be signing Soviet government's death warrant in three weeks. Get it through your heads that these terms don't affect our hold on power! And if Bukharin's and Lomov's confederates in Moscow have even gotten to the point where they can use the horrible, monstrous phrase, "the possible loss of Soviet power", then we've reached the end of the line! That's the mentality of a frenzied petty bourgeois, not a Communist! I do not have the slightest doubt. I have not issued this ultimatum to withdraw it later on.



*Lomov.* The solution Lenin proposes spells disaster for the revolution, so I cannot agree to it. A lot has been said here about panic in the ranks of the army, but no such panic exists. Fear is a great inventor. We can do a lot if we want. But if Lenin threatens us with his resignation we mustn't be intimidated. We'll just have to take power without Vladimir Ilyich! We'll have to go to the front and do what we can. Enough cowering! We've got to be up to the job the world proletariat has given us to do!

*Sverdlov.* Anyone else?

Everyone is silent. Only Lenin moves back and forth nervously in his corner: three paces to the left, three paces to the right.

Then we'll decide. (*Hoping to put off the crucial moment.*) Perhaps someone else would like to say something?

Everyone is silent.

Then we'll just vote on whether to accept the new German conditions.

*Dzerzhinsky (unable to restrain himself any longer).* Comrades! We need to take a recess before we vote! We need to cool off! We're upset! We're not hearing each other! What could happen next would have disastrous consequences for our party and movement! We are on the brink of a split! I demand a recess!

*Sverdlov.* Is there a second? No? Then I am taking a vote. All those in favour of accepting the new German conditions... Lenin, Sverdlov, Stasova, Stalin, Zinoviev, Smilga, Sokolnikov. Against... Bukharin, Lomov, Uritsky, Bubnov. Abstaining... Trotsky, Dzerzhinsky, Ioffe, Krestinsky. So seven votes were cast in favour of accepting the German terms, four against and there were four abstentions.

*Bukharin.* What kind of majority decision is that, when the four who abstained are also against? They're just intimidated by the resignation threat!

*Uritsky.* As we do not desire to bear responsibility for a decision that we regard to be profoundly mistaken and disastrous for the Russian and international revolution, particularly as it represents the will of a minority in the Central Committee, given that the four who abstained share our view, I declare in the name of Central Committee members Bukharin, Lomov, Bubnov and myself, Central

Committee candidate member Yakovleva, and Pyatakov and Smirnov that we are resigning from all responsible party and Soviet posts, but we retain complete freedom to work both inside and outside the party for what we consider to be the only correct positions on policy matters.

*Stalin.* It's a split. It's a faction.

All are silent. Everyone finds it hard to speak at this moment.

*Trotsky.* It would seem that I need to explain why I abstained. I am sceptical that we will be able to achieve peace, even at the price of capitulation. But I did not want to prevent a majority from being achieved so that we can present a single line.

*Lomov.* Vladimir Ilyich, do you concede that opponents to the treaty can openly campaign against it?

*Lenin.* Yes.

*Stalin.* By resigning their responsible posts haven't the comrades resigned from the party? The Brest decision — neither peace nor war — was also passed by one vote but we complied with it.

*Lenin.* Resigning from the Central Committee does not signify resignation from the party.

*Uritsky.* Even though Stalin suggests that we leave the party, we have no intention of doing that. We are resigning from our responsible posts, not the party. The congress will decide who represents the opinion of the party.

*Stalin.* Comrades, I am not making any accusations. I think you have the right to do as you think best. I just want to say how sad I feel that the comrades are leaving. Lomov, Smirnov and Pyatakov are absolutely irreplaceable. Do the comrades realise that their action will lead to a split? If you want clarity in the matter, and not a split, why not put off issuing your declaration until tomorrow, or, better yet, the party congress?

*Lomov.* No! You're not going to put off giving the Germans an answer. You're going to give it to them now. We're not going to put off our declaration either.

*Sverdlov.* Comrades, it's still too early for the peace supporters to celebrate. The reply to the Germans has to come not from the Central Committee of our party but from the highest body of government, the All-Russia Central Executive Committee. We will have to get our decision through it, and that won't be easy. Since there are opposition parties,

and since the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries will certainly vote against us, each vote will be worth its weight in gold. If there is disunity in our ranks, in the ranks of the Bolshevik faction, then the Central Committee's position won't achieve a majority in the Central Executive Committee.

*Bukharin.* You mean to say you want to deny us the right to vote as we see fit?

*Sverdlov.* Yes, comrades, I do. All Bolsheviks must cast their votes in accordance with the Central Committee's decision. Comrades, I ask all members of the Central Executive Committee to be at the meeting. Any other business should be postponed. I repeat: every vote counts. Who will not be there? No one? Good. If we present a united front we may be able to get some Left Socialist-Revolutionaries to vote with us. This meeting of the Central Committee is closed. I ask you all to go to the Tauride Palace, where the Central Executive Committee will be meeting. Seven o'clock isn't far away.

A group of *Latvians* rises from its place in the Chorus and enters Lenin's study.

*Latvian (his heavily accented voice breaking with emotion).* The Brest peace will mean the demise of Soviet rule in Latvia. Yes, the demise! If we vote with you for that treaty, if we sign it we will in effect be condemning to death the best sons of the Latvian working class, who the Germans are holding captive ... who will be sent to the gallows tomorrow by our vote. It is very hard, comrades... It's a great tragedy for us Latvian members of the Central Executive Committee. But we realise that the most important thing now is to save Soviet Russia. We're sure it will come to our aid someday and help us restore Soviet rule on our soil... That's why we've decided to vote with you for peace... But we ask you to understand our feelings, to understand that it breaks our hearts...

*Lenin (after a pause).* We can't demand a superhuman effort. Of course it's hard for them. I think we should thank our Latvian comrades for the genuine internationalism they have demonstrated and allow them not to vote. Even without them we have a few votes' leeway.

*Sverdlov.* Any objections? No. Our only request, comrades, is that you leave the hall when the voting begins so that the faction will remain united, and no one will see that there

are individuals who aren't voting among us. That's all, comrades. Please make your way to the Tauride Palace.

All exit except Lenin and Sverdlov.

*Lenin.* What do you think, Yakov Mikhailovich? Will anybody balk?

*Sverdlov.* They might.

*Lenin.* Well, I guess I'll take advantage of the last opportunity I've got. I'll go to the podium and shout, demand, persuade... with my eyes. Each and every one of them will encounter me one more time.

*Dzerzhinsky* returns.

*Dzerzhinsky (distraught).* Comrades ... you know me pretty well... the revolution is my whole life... It's been a vicious fight... But I still have a heart... It bleeds whenever I see injustice... I haven't been able to reconcile myself with Brest ... but I realise now that if we don't do this, others will have to start all over again... (*Exits.*)

*Sverdlov.* I completely forgot. (*He pulls out of his pocket a slip of paper torn from a notebook.*) Robins asked me to give this to you.

*Lenin.* The American government's reply?

*Sverdlov.* It's in English... I've been able to make headway only with German.

*Lenin (takes the slip of paper, reads it, then translates it).* "The support of honest people the world over..." (*Smiles.*) That's important, very important, Colonel Robins. And one day it will be a decisive factor. (*To Sverdlov.*) Time for us to go, too. What's wrong, Yakov Mikhailovich? Aren't you feeling well?

*Sverdlov.* I'm tired. Damn tired. (*He sits down.*) A complete split, Vladimir Ilyich... I don't know... If we'll survive it...

*Lenin (after a long pause to gather his thoughts).* Yes, it's the greatest crisis our revolution has faced. But we now have a new way of learning that will help us heal the fracture. It's life, the daily experience of the masses. If the fracture extended all the way down to the masses a split would be unavoidable. But the masses' unity is rapidly being restored. Faced with the facts, the masses will recognise that obtaining a breathing space is the right thing to do, and the pressure they exert from below will force the two halves

of the party together. The fracture will be overcome. Overcome. (*He pauses.*) A knightly order, you say? Hmmm... *Sverdlov (rising)*. I'm ready. Let's go.

The scene shifts to the hall where the All-Russia Central Executive Committee is to meet. The Chorus represents the Committee. Every place is taken. Noisy, heated debates are in progress. As soon as *Lenin* and *Sverdlov* appear, however, everyone falls silent. *Sverdlov* goes to the podium, while *Lenin* takes his place in the Chorus.

*Sverdlov*. Comrades, only one question is being submitted for consideration: the All-Russia Central Executive Committee must decide whether or not to accept the new peace terms. In light of the importance this question has for the fate of the Russian and world revolution and in order to emphasise the responsibility each member of the Central Executive Committee has, it has been resolved that a roll-call vote will be taken. When your name is called will each of you please step up to the podium and state your position loudly and clearly. Let's begin, comrades.

Silence reigns. *Lenin* rises and goes over to the podium. Each member will have to meet his gaze when voting.

Central Executive Committee member *Avdeyev*!  
*Avdeyev*: I am against peace!

The Chorus explodes into applause, shouts, boos and hisses.

*Sverdlov*. I demand absolute silence. *Akulov*?

*Akulov*. For peace.

*Sverdlov*. *Karakhan*?

*Karakhan*. For peace!

*Sverdlov*. *Kakhovskaya*?

*Kakhovskaya*. Against!

*Sverdlov*. *Steinberg*?

*Steinberg*. Against!

*Sverdlov*. *Martov*?

*Martov*. Against!

*Sverdlov*. *Spiridonova*?

*Spiridonova*. Against peace.

*Sverdlov*. *Yenukidze*?

*Yenukidze*. For peace.

*Sverdlov*. *Dan*?

*Dan*. Against!



*Sverdlov.* Lunacharsky?

*Lunacharsky.* For peace!

*Sverdlov.* Kollontai?

*Kollontai.* Agreed to peace.

*Sverdlov.* Dzerzhinsky?

*Dzerzhinsky.* Yes, peace.

*Sverdlov.* Lomov?

*Lomov.* For peace.

*Sverdlov.* Uritsky?

*Uritsky.* Peace.

*Sverdlov.* Bukharin?

*Bukharin (approaching the podium, to Lenin alone).* You would not respect me if I, Nikolai Bukharin, your pupil, were to go against my party conscience and raise my hand for a resolution which I consider disastrous for the Russian and world revolution.

Lenin looks at him silently.

Vladimir Ilyich...

Lenin is silent.

*Sverdlov.* Bukharin?

*Bukharin.* What should I do, Vladimir Ilyich?

Lenin is silent.

*Sverdlov.* Central Executive Committee member Bukharin?

*Bukharin.* Against peace.

Pandemonium in the Chorus, shouts of "Bravo!" "Boo!" "Quiet!"

*Sverdlov.* Quiet, please. Let's continue. Gorbov?

*Gorbov.* I refuse to vote!

*Sverdlov.* Stalin?

*Stalin.* For peace.

*Sverdlov.* Sokolnikov?

*Sokolnikov.* For peace!

*Sverdlov.* Ioffe?

*Ioffe.* For peace.

*Sverdlov.* Fabritius?

*Fabritius.* Abstain!

*Sverdlov.* Trotsky?

Silence. No one answers. Everyone starts to look around.

*Sverdlov.* Trotsky?

*A voice.* Absent!

*Sverdlov.* Zinoviev?

*Zinoviev.* I am in favour of peace.

*Sverdlov.* Ryazanov?

*Ryazanov.* Absolutely opposed!

*Sverdlov.* Ulyanov-Lenin?

*Lenin.* Peace!

*Sverdlov.* Sverdlov is for peace. Kamkov?

*Kamkov.* Against!

The lights are blacked out momentarily. The voting is complete.

*Sverdlov.* So, comrades, we have finished voting. Allow me to announce the results. For peace — 116, against — 85, with 26 abstaining. The motion for peace, made by the Bolsheviks, has passed!

Sverdlov's last words are drowned out by cries of "Traitors! You've sold Russia! Boo!" The Bolsheviks rise from their places and, surrounding Lenin, come downstage to the apron.

*Lenin (to himself, the audience and his comrades, softly, in a confiding tone).* We had to sign it... You need courage to face the bald truth. The better we understand this, the greater our inexorable determination will be to ensure that Soviet Russia performs its primary internationalist duty — to build a new society, to give the peoples of the world a shining idea made reality, to contrast the wars, filth and evil of capitalism with the peace, purity and virtue of socialism. What do we need to do that? Peace or war? That choice does not exist for us. We need to build, so our thirst for peace is not a tactical move made in a moment of weakness, but the very essence of our policy, of our whole life. Every hour of peace gives socialism a thousand times more than every day of war, even victorious. Learn from the painful, but beneficial lessons of the revolution, comrades... Learn so that you can win.

CURTAIN

1962—1987

# Blue Horses on Red Grass (Revolutionary Etude)



**DOCUMENTARY DRAMA**

The events depicted in the play are seen from three perspectives: from the present, through the music and songs of today, which is why young men and women stroll about on stage, strumming their guitars;

from year 1920, through documents and materials of that glorious time. That is why there are slogans and posters of the period on the stage, in the hall and foyer and a chorus which will help us to feel and understand the spirit of these documents;

episodes from one day in the life of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. That is why the scene is set in Lenin's office in the Kremlin, his apartment and kitchen and there are actors portraying Lenin, as well as others involved in the events. \*

At first this may seem to be an impossible combination.

It is important, however, that by the end of the play it should not seem strange any more, that we should feel (in our heart and soul) the indissoluble continuity of time. The play may begin with a few words on behalf of the theatre:

We are born of the Revolution...

We probe the past not out of curiosity but to understand the present and to visualise the future.

We want to look at a day in the life of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin...

We hope to bring the documents of that wonderful and fierce time to life...

We shall try to feel together with those people, who in the autumn days of 1920 heard Lenin speaking at the Third Congress of the Young Communist League of Russia...

We do not intend to try to create the illusion of Lenin's portrait likeness. Rather, we shall try to give reality to Nadezhda Krupskaya's words: "The image of Lenin is contained in the ideas of Lenin."

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\* The producer has a free hand in solving this very important task — to make all three perspectives coexist simultaneously on stage.

## PART ONE

### DOCUMENTS FROM THE YEAR 1920

"THE RED BANNER OF LABOUR RAISED BY US IS SPREADING ALL OVER THE WORLD! THOUSANDS HAVE LOST THEIR LIVES UNDER IT, MILLIONS SHALL WIN.

"NOTICE. The Third Congress of the Young Communist League of Russia will convene on October 2, 1920.

### THE AGENDA

*ONE.* THE MILITARY AND ECONOMIC SITUATION IN THE REPUBLIC. THE REPORTER WILL BE A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN COMMUNIST PARTY (BOLSHEVIKS) CC ... STILL TO BE DESIGNATED.

*TWO.* THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL OF YOUTH.

*THREE.* REPORT OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE.

*FOUR.* SOCIALIST UPBRINGING OF YOUTH.

*FIVE.* ORGANISATION OF A MILITIA AND THE PHYSICAL TRAINING OF YOUTH.

*SIX.* PROGRAMME OF THE YOUNG COMMUNIST LEAGUE OF RUSSIA.

*SEVEN.* THE CHARTER OF THE YOUNG COMMUNIST LEAGUE OF RUSSIA.

*EIGHT.* ELECTIONS TO THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE."

"TO LENIN, MOSCOW, THE KREMLIN.

DEAR COMRADE, IT MAKES ME HAPPY THAT THROUGH THIS LETTER I HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY OF ASSOCIATING WITH YOU IN MIND AND HEART. LIKE YOU, I, TOO, WAS WOUNDED IN 1918. EVER SINCE I HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO LEAVE MY BED. AND SO I HAVE TIME TO



THINK ABOUT THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS IN LIFE... ONLY IN RARE MOMENTS WHEN I FEEL A LITTLE BETTER AM I ABLE TO USE MY BRUSHES AND PAINTS. THEN I PAINT MY VISION OF THE FUTURE KINGDOM OF EQUALITY AND FRATERNITY WHEN MAN SHALL TRULY BE BEAUTIFUL, INSPIRED AND FREE. I SHALL CALL MY PAINTING *BLUE HORSES ON RED GRASS*. I KNOW I SHALL NOT LIVE TO SEE THAT GLORIOUS FUTURE. ITS DESTINY IS IN THE HANDS OF THOSE WHO FOLLOW US. HEREBY, I ASK YOUR PERMISSION TO BEQUEATH THIS PAINTING TO YOU — FOR ANYTHING MAY HAPPEN TO ME.  
“WITH COMMUNIST REGARDS  
“YOUR COMRADE-IN-STRUGGLE IN THE CIVIL WAR

*ALEXEI LENKOV.”*

## SCENE ONE

A green-shaded lamp on Lenin's desk in his office is switched on. Near one of the wings, a spotlight catches the face of the *Actor* who is to portray *Lenin*. So far there is nothing to indicate this. Perhaps the only hints are his suit and polka-dot tie, both typical of Lenin. There is no make-up on his face to enhance the resemblance. This also applies to others who are to play the parts of historical personages.

*Actor.* The autumn month of September 1920 was unusually sunny and warm, a brief Indian summer. Vladimir Ilyich was tormented by insomnia. Utterly exhausted after a day's tense work, he could find no rest during the night. Towards the end of the month, his wife, Krupskaya, insisted that Dr. Obukh be called to examine him. The doctor was an old party comrade. Lenin was very fond of him, both as a friend and a trusted physician. Having telephoned Dr. Obukh and arranged the visit, Lenin headed slowly for his office.

*(The Actor enters the office).* A sculptor working on a bust of Lenin had requested him to help prevent it from becoming too dry. *(The Actor examines the cloth covering the bust.)* He pours some water on it from a jar. *(The Actor does so.)* Then he goes behind the desk *(The Actor sits down.)* ... and looks over the front page of *Pravda*

carrying reports from all over the country (*he quickly runs through the paper*) ... then reads again the letter from the young artist which he had received the previous day... (*The Actor reads the letter.*)

At this point we become aware of the inner transformation of the Actor.

... And only after that he asks his secretary, *Natasha*, to show *Vladimir Alexandrovich Obukh* into his office as soon as he arrives. (*He takes off his coat, hangs it on the chair and loosens his tie.*)

*The Actor* playing the part of *Dr. Obukh* enters.

*Obukh.* Good morning, Vladimir Ilyich!

*Lenin.* Good morning, good morning, Vladimir Alexandrovich.

They shake hands.

Forgive me for taking you away from your really sick patients. It's all my wife's doing. She was so insistent — I had to give in. And of course my sister, *Maria*, joined in with her.

*Obukh.* I couldn't have withstood such a duo myself. But never mind. Let's just sit down and have a talk to put the family and ourselves at ease. There was no need to take off your coat. I am not going to examine you. All I'm going to do is feel that nasty thing you've got inside you.

*Lenin.* You mean the bullet?

*Obukh.* I sure do. Where is hiding now?

*Lenin.* Just where you left it two years ago.

*Obukh* (*feeling the back of Lenin's neck*). Then the damn thing should be here... Well, well — and so it is! Right here, right here! As for the second — it's lodged so deeply only an X-ray can get at it... Oh, well! Do they give you any pain?

*Lenin.* I really don't know. I guess not.

*Obukh.* Both should be removed and the sooner, the better. Well, then, any complaints? Forgive me, I should have said: "What do your wife and sister think you should complain about?" *Insomnia?*

*Lenin* (*smiling*). I think I can agree with them in that respect.

*Obukh.* How long have you had it?

*Lenin.* Quite some time.

*Obukh.* That's not such a state secret. You should have told me sooner. How about headaches?

*Lenin.* That's really the worst of it.

*Obukh.* Often?

*Lenin.* Too often.

*Obukh.* Feels like a steel ring pressing on your forehead?

*Lenin.* Something like that.

*Obukh.* Any trembling in your eyes, especially at the edges? We sometimes call it "ants on the run".

*Lenin.* Sometimes.

*Obukh.* And do you tire quickly?

*Lenin.* Seems so. Much more quickly than before.

*Obukh.* Hmmm. I see... I see... Let's feel your pulse. Hmmm. Rather tense. That's it. Fine. Splendid. And here... Well, just as I thought.

*Lenin.* Must be pretty bad.

*Obukh (smiling).* Nothing serious. You can put on your coat now. *(He speaks to the audience.)* Doctor Obukh would never forget that morning and those alarmed and searching eyes that so demanded the truth and nothing but the truth. As an experienced physician, Vladimir Alexandrovich had done everything he could and even more to slow down the progress of the disease. Meanwhile ... there was the ordeal of facing Lenin.

*Lenin (knotting his tie and speaking buoyantly).* Well, what's the verdict? How long have I got to live?

*Obukh (mimicking the tone).* And how long would you say you needed?

*Lenin.* Should I settle for the maximum?

*Obukh.* But within reason...

*Lenin (buoyantly).* Well, if it were the maximum ... so that I could even live to see blue horses grazing on red grass ... then I would need ... let me see ... about twenty-five years, I guess. Too much?

*Obukh.* I could have prescribed it, but you, my friend, are quite unmanageable. So all I can do now is try to intimidate you and smother you with lies. Then you can take them apart as you choose!

*Lenin.* No, it won't work. You're such a poor liar.

*Obukh.* That's what you think!

*Lenin.* Your eyes will give you away.

*Obukh.* Then, I'll not speak to you but to the two fine women who will, I'm sure, take my words seriously.

*Lenin.* Have a heart!

*Obukh.* Don't even count on that! You're buried in paper work again. Up to your ears! And you've completely forgotten your promise. Whenever I pass your house at night — no matter how late — there's a light in your window. At midnight yesterday, I'm sure, you were just into your sixteenth working hour.

*Lenin.* You're wrong there, by the way. I was at a concert yesterday.

*Obukh.* That's not exactly the whole truth. You were at the Bolshoi Theatre alright. Then the audience recognised you and burst into a storm of applause. So you got up and went home. And what did you do next? Go to bed? Oh, no! You went to your desk! Till three o'clock in the morning! You would have been better off at the theatre putting up with the ovation. At least you would have enjoyed yourself and relaxed.

*Lenin.* Ovations have nothing to do with it. Our audiences are uncivilised. They just don't know how to behave at concerts. Chaliapin came out on to the stage and how did they greet him? With cries of "Long live Lenin!" Of course, he had to retreat into the wings. They come to hear a great singer and give Lenin an ovation! What a disgrace! What a disgrace! What disrespect for the artist! How could I stay after that? Of course I had to extend my apologies to Chaliapin.

*Obukh.* Well, alright, so yesterday you had an excuse. But tell me, when was the last time you took time off to rest? You know what I think? It's you, not Tsyurupa, who should be tried for squandering state property — your health!

*Lenin (gaily).* There's one thing you will never be. An intriguer!

*Obukh.* When did you last have a vacation? Just tell me, when!? And none of your tall stories! You can fool a doctor, I know, but don't forget one thing. I am as much a Bolshevik as you and I have the right to the truth. Now we are discussing the matter politically.

*Lenin.* I would rather discuss it medically.

*Obukh.* No, it's a party matter.

*Lenin (smiling).* Well, alright. Let's compromise — it's both. A party-medical talk.

*Obukh.* Comrade Ulyanov, please tell me the truth — when's the last time you gave yourself a break?

*Lenin.* It's that serious?

*Obukh.* It is. Quite serious. Because you are literally working yourself to death!

*Lenin (after a brief silence).* It's not just me, you know. It's true of all of us. The entire Central Committee and the Council of People's Commissars. We're all loaded with work! Inevitably some important things come my way — and some more besides. Now, if I could only shake off that exhaustion...

*Obukh.* How? By running yourself into the ground? The more you run yourself ragged, the less you'll accomplish.

*Lenin.* I'm afraid I'm running out of time...

Pause

Vladimir Alexandrovich, what is in store for me? What do all those symptoms mean? Please try to see it my way. I must know. I just must know how much time I have left ... at least approximately. Forgive me, I realise this is not an easy conversation. I am backing you up against the wall. But what else can I do? I can hardly discuss the matter with my wife or sister. You're the only one. You were right — let's treat it as a party matter.

*Obukh.* As a medical matter.

*Lenin (smiling).* Alright, a party-medical matter.

*Obukh.* But my dear comrade! Who can really give you an answer? We're descending into the realm of mysticism!

*Lenin.* Oh, to the devil with mysticism! It's science we need! Add it all up — my vital statistics! I'm fifty years old, I was wounded, I have headaches and insomnia. With your knowledge and experience you should be able to figure it out.

*Obukh.* Figuring out something beyond the powers of man is not exactly what you'd call scientific. Nor a Marxist approach!

*Lenin.* I'll take my chances with the Marxists. I'm sure they'll forgive us.

*Obukh.* It's like asking me to forecast your future by reading your palm.

*Lenin.* I'm only asking you to have a little courage. (*Walks around the office.*) If I could only know. If I only had some idea... I think I'm quoting Chekhov... One of his plays.

*Obukh (stressing his words).* You are only fifty. Objectively speaking, your condition is not bad. You are a very good swimmer, an excellent marksman and generally in excellent health if you have managed to survive so many meetings



and endless paper work. You are exhausted? Well, then, change your daily schedule, and everything will sort itself out.

*Lenin.* But that is beyond my powers, Vladimir Alexandrovich, and you know that very well.

*Obukh.* Don't try to make me an accomplice! Keep me out of it!

*Lenin (picks up a pile of papers from the table).* The Civil War is almost over but General Wrangel<sup>1</sup> is still in the Crimea. We still have a Polish front<sup>2</sup> in the West. *(He drops a few papers on the table.)* The peace talks in Riga<sup>3</sup> are progressing at a snail's pace. We are expecting Poland's new terms today. They will probably demand Lithuania and Byelorussia... *(Puts down another paper on the table.)* The country is in total ruin. The national output is only eighteen per cent of the prewar level. Lifeless fields, lifeless factories, frozen, paralysed trains... *(The papers float through the air and land on the table).* Our cities are in the grip of hunger. Our villages are shackled with food requisitions.<sup>4</sup> If we reduce the quotas the villages will breathe more easily but the cities will die. If we increase them the cities will eat a bit more but we will lose the villages. We shall turn them against us. And what will all this mean to Russia? I don't have to tell you. Here's a telegram from Krasin<sup>5</sup> in London. He has sold our hemp and furs for one hundred thousand pounds. Now he wants to know what to do with them. A fierce struggle has been going on for a whole week among all the People's Commissars for that money. Night and day they're after me, everywhere — here, at home. Here's the list of the emergency goods we so badly need — trains ... telegraphic equipment ... canned meat ... wire ... electric motors ... nails ... over a thousand articles. And every Commissar is right. All expect me to support them. Need I continue, Vladimir Alexandrovich?

*Obukh.* But you need to look after your health. You need to restrict yourself to the major problems. As for the rest, no matter how urgent, let other comrades handle it. And for you no more than a ten-hour day, with a two-hour break and a day off every weekend or else face house arrest. You need to get out into the country, to swim, hunt, relax, or simply go for a stroll.

*Lenin.* And then can I send the damn bullet to the devil?

*Obukh.* What has the bullet got to do with it?

*Lenin (casting a glance in Obukh's direction).* I see.

(*He rises.*) Thank you, Vladimir Alexandrovich. I shall follow your advice.

*Obukh.* I want it understood: if all this is not done and our little talk was all for nothing, I shall notify the Political Bureau immediately and I don't want you to be offended.

*Lenin (smiling).* Don't try to intimidate me. You never had the makings of a penpusher. Thank you and give my warmest regards to your family.

*Obukh.* Not at all. Remember me to Nadezhda Konstantinovna and your sister, Maria Ilyinichna.

They shake hands.

*Obukh* leaves.

*Lenin* (sits at his desk, puts his clasped hands on it and is motionless. He is lost in thought. Then he whistles and sings softly.)

*In Daghestan the glaring sun shines brightly,  
A bullet in my heart, alone I lay.  
My wound with scarlet blood still hot and smoky,  
All trace of life its glossy drops will bear away...<sup>6</sup>*

(Suddenly, as if coming to a decision, he rises abruptly and goes to the door.) *Natasha*, please...

Lenin's secretary *Natasha*, a young girl of twenty, enters.

What do we have scheduled today?

*Natasha (opens her notebook).* At twelve there's an interview with Dolgov, a reporter for the Russian Telegraph Agency. He's just returned from London.

*Lenin.* Good.

*Natasha.* At one there's a commission on cutting down the state apparatus.

*Lenin.* Extend my regrets and tell them I won't be able to make it.

*Natasha.* At two there's a meeting of all departments dealing with the economy and with representatives of the All-Russia Economic Council to discuss the distribution of Krasin's money.

*Lenin.* Postpone that for tomorrow's meeting of the Council of People's Commissars.

*Natasha.* At six there's a meeting with Clara Zetkin. But you promised to see her at your house.

*Lenin.* Good.

*Natasha.* And then there's Comrade Bryukhanov...

*Lenin.* Yes, I remember, but I won't be able to see him. Have him get in touch with Lomov.

*Natasha.* Then a delegation from the State Publishing House....

*Lenin.* My apologies. Tell them I'm not feeling well... (*Natasha looks at him with alarm.*) Oh, it's really nothing. Tell them to see Lunacharsky.

*Natasha.* There was a call from the Central Committee of the Young Communist League. They want very much to see you. Their third congress opens on October 2 and they want you to speak to them on the military and economic situation in the Soviet Republic.

*Lenin.* They want me to make a report?

*Natasha.* There's quite a sharp discussion going on in their Central Committee. They are all quite confused.

*Lenin.* What are they debating so hotly?

*Natasha.* Well, for one thing — what to call the League. Should it be the Young Communist League or the League of Communist Youth?

*Lenin.* And is there any difference?

*Natasha.* Of course there is! In their opinion. And they're drowning in paper to prove it.

*Lenin.* No, I hardly feel I'm equipped to deal with such questions. Let the organisation bureau decide it.

*Natasha.* They probably want your opinion.

*Lenin.* But why should I complicate the matter more than it already is? Why compromise a collective decision of the Central Committee? No! This is for the organisation bureau! For them alone!

*Natasha.* Someone by the name of Sapozhnikova, who works at the Moscow City Soviet, would like to see you. She's been sentenced to thirty-six hours of disciplinary arrest. She claims it is all unjustified. She says you know her personally through some public meeting or other, and that you can help her...

*Lenin.* Sapozhnikova? Sapozhnikova?... The name doesn't sound familiar. My apologies and tell her to take it up with the Moscow Party Committee. Don't schedule anything after eight. I'm going for a walk.

*Natasha.* For a walk?

*Lenin.* Yes, for a walk. Every day from now on. For an hour and a half. And another small request, Natasha. Please don't draw the curtains on the windows completely... It gives

me an unpleasant feeling of isolation... I feel like a mouse in a trap...

*Natasha.* Oh, forgive me, Vladimir Ilyich, I had no idea...  
(*She draws the curtains open.*)

*Lenin.* And, another thing, Natasha. Find Lunacharsky and ask him to phone me. Tell Tsyurupa that I'm expecting him with all the materials of the commission on cutting down the state apparatus. Find Kirov<sup>7</sup> and tell him to get in touch with me. Book a direct line through to the Western Front and then the Southern Front for three. Ask the Revolutionary Military Council to forward all materials on Wrangel — there's a meeting on this question at four. If Riga calls get in touch with me immediately wherever I am. A peasant delegate from the Urals has been given a room at the third House of the Soviets, Room 16. I would like to speak to him. If he wishes to see me ask him to come some time today or tomorrow. When do we have some spare time today?

*Natasha.* Only in the evening. But you wanted to go for a walk.

*Lenin.* No, no, we won't touch that time. Perhaps today at one o'clock if he is free, I could see him. What was that woman's name you said?

*Natasha.* Sapozhnikova.

*Lenin.* No, I don't recall the name. And finally this. I received this letter yesterday. Please find out all you can about the man who wrote it. Perhaps he needs something. But let the comrades treat the matter delicately.

*Natasha.* I will. (*She leaves.*)

*Lenin* goes up to the window and looks out of it viewing the city. Softly the song *Blue Horses on Red Grass* begins to sound.

*Winged heavens  
Have touched with the ground,  
Horses blue  
On red grasses are grazing,  
With long manes  
Like the waterfalls,  
Hoofs with sparks  
In the brush raising hell!  
Wide and broad  
Are the forests and meadows,  
Russia's winds  
Will embrace them, I know.  
And the clouds*

*Will emerge from the heavens,  
Horses blue  
On red grasses for you!  
They will fly  
Free and proud in the forest,  
They will stop  
In mid-air, like a dream,  
And the spirit  
Of my Revolution,  
Horses blue  
May they carry to you!*<sup>8</sup>

“HEROES OF THE PROLETARIAT ARE SIMPLE, ORDINARY PEOPLE. THEIR HEROISM LIES IN THEIR ABILITY TO DO WHAT HAS TO BE DONE WHEN IT MUST BE DONE.” “WE DO NOT KNOW YOUR NAMES, HEROES, BUT WE KNOW OF YOUR COURAGE. IT SHALL LIVE WITH US FOREVER.”

“WESTERN FRONT. TO THE HEAD OF THE SPECIAL DEPARTMENT OF THE 15th ARMY, Ya.K. BEREZIN FROM A MEMBER OF THE YCL S.N. BOGDANOVICH.”

### A REPORT

“BEING A MEMBER OF THE UNDERGROUND BEHIND ENEMY LINES, I HAPPENED TO WITNESS THE EXECUTION OF THREE YOUNG GIRLS FOR COMMUNIST AFFILIATION AND AM HEREBY REPORTING THE INCIDENT.

“AROUND 10 P.M. THE PEOPLE OF YASKOVO IN THE PETROVSKY DISTRICT WERE FORCIBLY ASSEMBLED BY SOLDIERS IN THE TOWN SQUARE. AGAINST THE WALL OF THE LOCAL SCHOOL, LIT UP BY THE HEADLIGHTS OF BRITISH TRUCKS, STOOD THREE CONDEMNED GIRLS SUPPORTING EACH OTHER. IT WAS CLEAR FROM THEIR APPEARANCE THEY HAD BEEN TORTURED.

“WHEN ASKED BY THE OFFICER OF THE ‘DEMOCRATIC’ EXECUTIONERS WHAT WAS THEIR LAST REQUEST ALL THREE REPLIED THAT THEY WANTED TO SING THE *INTERNATIONALE*. THIS THEY WERE DENIED. THEY THEN SUGGESTED THEY BE PERMITTED TO SING *FORWARD, FRIENDS, DO*



NOT WAVER. PEOPLE WEPT AS THE GIRLS SANG.  
(*we hear the singing.*) THIS ALARMED THE  
OFFICER WHO THEN ORDERED THE SQUAD TO  
FIRE. (*The song stops abruptly*). ALL MY EFFORTS  
TO FIND OUT THE NAMES OF THESE THREE GIRLS  
WERE UNSUCCESSFUL. NO ONE, IT SEEMS, KNEW  
THEM SINCE THEY WERE BROUGHT HERE ONLY  
FOR THEIR EXECUTION. FROM UNCONFIRMED  
SOURCES I LEARNED THAT THEY WERE KOM-  
SOMOL MEMBERS FROM PETROGRAD WHO WERE  
ENGAGED IN EDUCATING THE PEOPLE ABOUT  
COMMUNISM. THERE IS NOTHING MORE I CAN  
ADD. I HEREBY SIGN MY NAME,

BOGDANOVICH S. N."

"RESOLUTION: TO BE FORWARDED TO THE  
ARCHIVES FOR ETERNAL PRESERVATION."

An appendix (by the author):

*Forward, friends, do not waver.  
Fight to the bitterest end,  
You are our Motherland's saviours.  
Stand up for its honour, my friend!  
If we are destined to perish  
In dreary dungeons and mines,  
Our cause will be carried on forward  
In the hearts of all living mankind!  
Burdened with hardships and hunger,  
Poor Russian folk barely breathe,  
Hoping for help we can render,  
They call to us from underneath!  
If we are destined to perish  
In dreary dungeons and mines,  
Our cause will be carried on forward  
In the hearts of all living mankind!  
Victory Day is approaching,  
People'll no more be slaves.  
And when they recall how we perished  
They'll bring flowers on our graves!*

"TO THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE YOUNG  
COMMUNIST LEAGUE OF "RUSSIA. PERSONNEL DE-  
PARTMENT. REVIEW OF THE YCL BRANCH AT THE

SECOND MECHANICAL SHOPS IN THE GORODSKOI DISTRICT OF MOSCOW. MEMBERSHIP FOR THE YEARS OF 1918-1920.

"THE BRANCH WAS FORMED IN MARCH 1918 NUMBERING 13 PEOPLE AS LISTED:

1. SERGEI KIRSANOV — KILLED IN ACTION AT TSARITSYN
2. SERGEI ZABELIN — KILLED IN ACTION AT TSARITSYN
3. VASILI NEFYODOV — KILLED WHILE REQUISITIONING FOOD
4. SEMYON DAVYDOV — GAVE UP HIS MEMBERSHIP
5. NIKOLAI TERNOVSKY — KILLED IN ACTION ON THE EASTERN FRONT
6. BORIS POPOV — DIED IN HOSPITAL
7. NIKOLAI SVETKOV — KILLED IN ACTION ON THE EASTERN FRONT
8. PETYA NIKITIN — KILLED FIGHTING YUDE-NICH
9. LIDA OBUKHOVA — HANGED BY PETLURA BANDITS
10. KLAVDIA KARSHINA — DIED OF TYPHUS
11. IGOR NIZHNIK — SHOT BY KOLCHAK MEN
12. VOLODYA SOBOLEVSKY — KILLED BY THE WHITEGUARDS AT TULA
13. MARIA UVAROVA — IS WORKING TO RECRUIT MEMBERS FOR THE YOUNG COMMUNIST LEAGUE.

"AT PRESENT 31 YOUNG PEOPLE WANT TO JOIN.

*UVAROVA.*

"MOSCOW, AUGUST 17, 1920"

## SCENE TWO

*Lenin's office. He is conversing with Dolgov, a correspondent with the Russian Telegraph Agency.*

*Lenin (addressing Dolgov).* Our plans for Asia are the same as for Europe: peaceful coexistence with all the peoples of the world awakening to a new life.

*Dolgov (making notes).* And the basis for peace with the United States of America?

*Lenin.* Let the American capitalists leave us alone. We will not touch them.

*Dolgov.* And what about the situation with respect to Poland?

*Lenin.* It's a known fact that Poland started it all by seizing Kiev. And so we counter-attacked and approached Warsaw. Then a crisis developed and we withdrew hundreds of miles. Peace talks are now in progress in Riga. We are hoping for the best.

*Dolgov (in an outburst).* Oh, Vladimir Ilyich! If only I had a chance to speak my mind...

*Lenin.* Why, of course. Go right ahead.

*Dolgov.* I'm just fresh from Europe. Do you realise what kind of an impression all our concessions, compromises and pleas for peace are making?

*Lenin.* Well, it takes time and a certain broadness of mind to understand that one day of peace can mean much more for the construction of socialism than ten days of war, even a victorious war.

*Dolgov.* No, Vladimir Ilyich, a victorious war would open up wide opportunities for us in Europe...

*Lenin.* My dear Sasha, how old are you?

*Dolgov.* Twenty-three.

*Lenin (after a brief silence).* In politics we need not only hot blood but also cool heads if we don't want to make fools of ourselves. (*He repeats.*) War would open up opportunities... Oh, Sasha! War is the slaughter of people. It is the ruination of the economy, it is hunger, the destruction of hundreds of thousands of peasant homesteads, it is countless orphans...

*Dolgov.* But the most important thing is the ultimate result — victory, and what a victory! Why are you silent, Vladimir Ilyich?

*Lenin.* I am thinking of the price we have to pay for every victory. It's a thought I can never get out of my mind.

The telephone rings.

(*He picks up the receiver.*) Yes, speaking. How are you, Georgi Ippolitovich? No, Krasin's money has not yet been distributed. We'll settle it all tomorrow at the meeting of the Council of People's Commissars. No, please don't try to enlist

my support. We'll decide the issue in the fairest possible way. The neediest come first. How do I like the sculptor? It's all Lunacharsky's doing! Not only do I have to pose for the artist for a whole hour daily, which is a criminal waste of time, but I also have to keep pouring water on the bust regularly to keep the clay from drying up and cracking... (*He laughs.*) I'll never forgive you for doing this to me. Remember, you'll pay for this! Agreed! (*He puts down the receiver.*) And how do we look from out there, Comrade Dolgov? What do our friends think and say about us?

*Dolgov.* Unfortunately, I have to disappoint you. They think and speak poorly of us.

*Lenin.* Why?

*Dolgov.* The general view is that the Bolsheviks have betrayed their international obligations. The talk is that the world revolution is gasping for air. There had been hopes of creating a Soviet Europe. But now it's only a beautiful but impossible dream... I find it very hard to answer.

*Lenin.* How do you mean?

*Dolgov.* There's no cause for smiling, Vladimir Ilyich! How can one explain to the European working class why the Red Army stopped at the outskirts of Warsaw and the German border when all it would have taken was just one last push to topple the bourgeois governments, and instead of going to Riga with outstretched hands we could have regrouped our forces and broken into Europe on Pilsudsky's<sup>9</sup> heels? There's no telling what Budyonny's cavalry might have accomplished there!

*Lenin.* In Europe? I can imagine...

*Dolgov.* All the better...

*Lenin.* Is this really what you think or...

*Dolgov.* It's what our friends think and I agree with them! Take England, for example. They have a wonderful group of industrial workers there who are ready to start a revolution tomorrow. All they need are leaders — and we could supply them.

*Lenin.* Sylvia Pankhurst probably had such leadership in mind when she wrote to me: "Marvellous people with something merciless in their nature that may come in very handy when the revolution is ripe." Something like that.

*Dolgov.* Absolutely right! I met Sylvia and I know all about that letter. She asked you to use your great prestige to urge the British workers to start a revolution. But you refused! Your answer, I must say, was strange and quite

disappointing. Frankly I thought your reply was based on misinformation. I was simply astonished when I returned to Moscow. People are interested in nails and meat. No one at all is concerned about our brothers languishing in the prisons of Europe, whom the Red Army could easily save if we had remained revolutionaries! Finally, however, I understood what's behind it all. May I explain?

*Lenin.* By all means.

*Dolgov.* It seems to me that the old guard is simply worn out. It's been through so much: prison, hard labour, exile, illness, and injuries. It's exhausted! There are limits to human endurance.

*Lenin.* And you think that's it?

*Dolgov.* Of course! No wonder the mood of our youth is altogether different!

*Lenin.* In what way?

*Dolgov.* I had the good fortune to come to Moscow on a freighter with a group of Komsomol members, delegates to the YCL congress. You want to know what they kept discussing day and night? That you would step onto the platform and say: "Enough of these endless meetings! Down with your talking shop! Grab your rifles and bayonets and off to the Polish front! Every single one of you! On to Warsaw!" And the only thing they argued about was whether there would be one meeting at the congress followed by immediate mobilisation or two, so that a new Central Committee could be elected. If you could only have seen those kids, Vladimir Ilyich!

*Lenin.* Unfortunately, I probably shan't be able to speak at their congress. There are too many urgent matters to deal with. Let's get back to our discussion, if you don't mind.

*Dolgov.* Gladly.

*Lenin.* I like the sincerity in your voice and your eyes... But what utter nonsense! Forgive me for being so blunt! In revolutionary experience you are still wet behind your ears!

*Dolgov.* I'm not at all offended, not at all! Please continue.

*Lenin (smiling).* The idea of world revolution is very dear to us but the Sovietisation of Europe at the point of Red Army bayonets is no more than revolutionary adventure! We do not intend to impose socialism with bayonets on anyone. We shall defend socialism with bayonets if necessary but that is altogether different. Revolution cannot be export-



ed. It develops naturally within a country. Why did we lose in Poland now? Because of military errors? Was that the only reason? No. It can be better explained by our inability to reach the Polish working class. And they didn't back us. If anyone expects to come to power through someone else's bayonets or through a band of "merciless revolutionaries" and without the support of his people and in defiance of their wishes, and believes this is the right way...

*Dolgov.* But, Vladimir Ilyich, aren't we making a fetish of the people?

*Lenin.* But Sasha, do you see the people as merely an obedient, passive object to be commanded? The very thought is ridiculous! When I "failed" to urge our British comrades to call for revolution — such advice would have been criminal — but encouraged them to work more closely with the masses, to enlighten them and win them over, you said that my advice...

*Dolgov.* Was strange and disappointing.

*Lenin.* How can a young Marxist display such reluctance to work with the masses, such disdain for them? And at the same time make such life-and-death decisions for them? Do you know why we were victorious in 1917 although we were only a few thousand? Because millions of people supported us. That is our strength! And we shall be invincible as long as the masses are with us. The most sacred thing for a communist is his close ties with the people. If these ties are severed, if we begin to live our own life and the people theirs, then we're in trouble, Sasha. So don't dismiss the people so high-handedly. And if you claim to be a party of the people you are obliged to express their vital interests. You are obliged to live among and not away from them. You must know their moods and everything there is to know about them. You must understand them thoroughly, know how to approach them, you must win their absolute trust and, of course, you must never flatter them but tell them the truth!

*Natasha* enters and hands Lenin a parcel.

*Natasha.* From the Revolutionary Military Council. Some data on Wrangel.

*Lenin* (*signing the receipt*). Thanks, Natasha. Has Riga called yet?

*Natasha.* No. The peasant delegate will be here at one

o'clock. I explained everything to Sapozhnikova, but she's in tears.

*Lenin.* Ask the comrades from the Moscow Party Committee to give her all their attention.

*Natasha.* I already have.

*Lenin.* Thank you. And one more thing, if I may burden you. Find a kettle of cold water somewhere and pour it on my poor, wretched head, for heaven's sake, will you?

*Natasha* nods automatically and leaves.

*Dolgov.* I have listened to you attentively, Vladimir Ilyich, and you have given me a lot of food for thought. But tell me then, please, what is the essence of our international commitments?

*Lenin.* Building genuine socialism, giving the people of the world an inspiring ideal which has become reality, demonstrating the advantages of socialism by practical achievements in the very face of capitalism. That is the main thing. To achieve the maximum possible results in one country and by so doing help develop, support and awaken revolution in all countries of the world. That's internationalism in practice!

*Dolgov.* But if we continue to build the way we are doing now, at a snail's pace, we'll never get anywhere. And what good will come of all your fine words? That's the first thing. And then you say that the Sovietisation of Europe with the help of the Red Army is impossible...

*Lenin.* Absolutely!

*Dolgov.* Well, then, to speed up the entire process, perhaps we do need to employ military coercion? For man indeed is a lazy animal. Unless ordered or commanded he just won't work. Trotsky, in my opinion, is right in saying that free labour will be productive only in a bourgeois society. In our circumstances, the economy can only be built on the basis of coercion. It's the best, the most ideal method for the construction...

*Lenin* (restraining himself). Of what?

*Dolgov.* Of communism.

*Lenin.* What communism? The communism Marx so aptly labelled "barracks communism"?

*Dolgov.* It's the essence of the issue, not the terminology that matters.

*Lenin.* But what do barracks have to do with commu-

nism? Barracks where people are a voiceless mass, no more than bricks and mortar, where people work under the whip, where the human personality is negated, talent feared and violently rejected, where culture is scorned and moral stagnation reigns, where there is no life, only the rule of regulations. What do barracks, I ask you, have in common with communism?

*Dolgov.* I had something else in mind.

*Lenin.* But nothing else can be built with that "ideal" method of yours, except barracks! If a wonderful idea is attempted by the wrong methods — do you know what the outcome will be? People will begin to question the idea itself. They will blame the idea, not the method. That is the essence of the entire matter. (*He walks about the office.*) There is only one thing I fail to understand, Sasha. Where did you, a young man, get this arrogant, disrespectful attitude towards the people? If for a communist the human being is merely a thing, a dumb, lazy animal, then anything is possible: beginning with a world revolution at the point of Red Army bayonets to dreaming of forcibly imposing communism. But then — forgive me — he's no communist! (*He pours himself a glass of water from a decanter and drinks it.*)

*Dolgov.* I have really disappointed you, haven't I, Vladimir Ilyich? I know. But it would have been a thousand times worse, I believe, if I had insulted you by simply agreeing with everything you say.

*Lenin.* I hate yes-men. If I had it my way, I would hang up a poster in all offices reading: "Long live the flexible brain! Down with the flexible spine!"

*Dolgov.* Let me think it all over. I want to understand, not just memorise.

*Lenin.* Right, Sasha! At last I can compliment you on a mature statement. Communism cannot be memorised by heart! It has to be wrestled with, comprehended, mastered. Without brainwork it's just shallow slogans.

*Dolgov.* And if I find that I cannot agree with you, I shall draw the conclusions myself.

*Lenin.* Just what do you mean by that?

*Dolgov.* Obviously with such disparity of views I can hardly expect to continue in my present post.

*Lenin (he stops smiling.)* What kind of education did you get?

*Dolgov.* Actually I didn't quite finish high school. I was ex-

pelled for distributing leaflets. After that it's been self-education.

*Lenin (brightening)*. That's the whole point! You need a lot of schooling, immediately! Such a mish-mash in that head of yours...

*Dolgov*. Schooling? Now? Who's going to let me give up my job?

*Lenin*. You tell your superiors: "I want to become a real communist! I want to learn, learn!"

*Dolgov*. But I've been a Bolshevik since 1915.

*Lenin*. Well, don't be offended. I have greater reasons to feel offended today. I've known you, Sasha, for so many years. I've followed your work with unconcealed sympathy. My family even pokes fun at me sometimes. They say you're my pet... How could your honest heart not tell you that all the things you tried to propose today — yes, yes, from beginning to end — is repulsive to Bolshevism and goes against all human feelings?

*Dolgov*. But why?

*Lenin*. Because you claim the only possible relation with the masses is violence instead of conviction and the power of example.

*Dolgov*. Forgive me, Vladimir Ilyich, but we never ruled out violence and we never will.

*Lenin*. My dear Sasha, ideally we are against violence. Unfortunately violence today can be justified as the only counter-measure to violence unleashed against us. As violence against the perpetrators of violence. It's not a method of governing people. Now, don't you see how immoral your approach is?

*Dolgov (despondently)*. No, Vladimir Ilyich, I don't.

*Lenin (after a pause)*. Sasha, you need a lot more than study. Without communist morality, without communist ethics you will never achieve anything. Knowledge alone, without morality, breeds, as Marx put it, "professional cretinism".

*Dolgov*. But what, Vladimir Ilyich, is communist morality? What do you mean by it?

*Lenin (after a brief silence)*. Someone who wrote to me called his painting depicting his vision of communism *Blue Horses on Red Grass*. That's a poetic vision of the future. (*He smiles.*) Blue horses on red grass... What a way to put it... Well, that is up to the artist. I personally prefer brown horses on green grass but we should not let artistic preferences become criteria of judgement. Let us deal with the

essence of the vision. The artist is expressing his understanding of communism. Humanity from times immemorial has dreamed of the reign of reason, justice and truth. The working class has assumed the great mission of building this future. And from this struggle for such a society we derive our communist concept of morality. Everything that helps to establish mankind's dream of truth and beauty is moral. Everything that hinders it is immoral. And every time a communist confronts this question, especially in critical situations, he should recall these words of Marx: "A cause requiring unjust methods is not a just cause."

*Dolgov (after a brief silence).* Thank you, Vladimir Ilyich. I have a lot to think about. Forgive me for taking up so much of your time. Goodbye.

*Lenin.* Goodbye, Sasha.

*Dolgov leaves, Natasha enters.*

Natasha, how many items are there on the agenda of tomorrow's meeting of the Council of People's Commissars?

*Natasha.* Twenty-three, not counting Krasin's money.

*Lenin.* Let me have the agenda, please.

*Natasha.* Here. *(She hands it to him.)*

*Lenin.* Hmm... I see. I'm not ready for those two items yet. Please contact the Rumyantsev public library<sup>10</sup> and ask for these books just for tonight. *(He hands her the list.)* Only for tonight. I'll return them in the morning.

*Natasha.* Certainly, Vladimir Ilyich. Some Komsomol members called. They were terribly disappointed to hear you won't be able to see them. They say they were looking forward to your speech.

*Lenin (after a pause).* No, no, let the organising committee deal with it. One minute, please, Natasha. Find out the price of bread today on Sukharevka.<sup>11</sup>

## DOCUMENTS FROM THE YEAR 1920

"REMEMBER! THE ENEMY IS NOT TOTALLY DEFEATED YET. KEEP YOUR POWDER DRY AND ON WRANGEL KEEP AN EYE!"

"IF YOU WANT TO START OUTRIGHT STUDY, WORKER, AND BE BRIGHT!"

"DUE TO THE EXHAUSTION OF ALL OUR SPEAKERS



(MEDICALLY CONFIRMED) ALL MEETINGS FOR NEXT WEEK ARE CANCELED!"

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A YOUTH GET-TOGETHER WITH QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON THE SUBJECT OF "YOUTH AND CULTURE", HELD BY THE YOUNG COMMUNIST LEAGUE OF THE GORODSKOI DISTRICT IN MOSCOW. QUESTIONS WERE ANSWERED BY COMRADE YARMATOV.

*Question.* What's the situation with respect to culture today?

*Yarmatov.* The situation as regards culture today, comrades, is very good. We have destroyed the old world. On its ruins we are building a lofty palace of Labour and Freedom, an integral part of which is a working class, a purely proletarian culture.

*Question.* What is proletarian culture?

*Yarmatov.* It is a culture created by the proletariat itself. The proletariat is now rearing new artists and writers among its ranks. By the way, anyone who wants to participate, just give me your name. These proletarian artists and writers must be independent in their creative work and must be immune to the pernicious influence of bourgeois and peasant writers. Just judge for yourself, comrades. A worker, if he can handle a pen or a brush, will be able to express himself directly. Right? Whereas an intellectual can only give us his view of the worker on the job second-hand. Right? But why should we put up with second-hand stuff? A new proletarian culture will emerge and is already being created by the workers who remain right on the job. Proletarian culture has as its aim to supplant professional architects with construction workers, artists — with wall painters, writers and poets — with printing workers.

*Question.* And what about the peasants?

*Yarmatov.* The peasants cannot create a proletarian culture and therefore we must cut ourselves off from them once and for all.

*Question.* Then what about our policy of alliance with the peasants?

*Yarmatov.* That has nothing to do with proletarian culture. You see, comrades, we need to create a pure working class culture without the slightest rural influence. This, indeed,

explains our attitude to the culture of the past: we reject it resolutely!

*Question.* You mean entirely?

*Yarmatov.* Yes. Entirely! If we even as much as touch the culture of the past and are not firm enough and uncompromising, it will not be the proletariat who will master this culture of the past. On the contrary, the culture of the past will take over the proletariat as human material for its own alien class interests. Let me give you an example. What will happen to you if you read a lot of books by, say, Turgenev, Tolstoy, Chekhov or Dostoyevsky with their maudlin bourgeois notions? Your mind will fall under the influence of those people who are offsprings of alien classes. And then what will happen? A process of reappraisal of proletarian values sets in and the excellent building material that you are and that is so vital for the creation of a new society, will perish.

*Question.* Is this correct from a Marxist point of view?

*Yarmatov.* Absolutely correct! Our Marxist attitude towards the culture of the past was very well expressed by our first proletarian poet, Kirillov. Just listen to these lines.

*We have drunk of the passionate wine of revolt,  
Let them cry: you are killers of beauty!  
In the name of the Morrow we'll burn Raphael,  
Smash museums and art as our duty!*

*Question.* Then how are we to understand the decrees of the Council of People's Commissars on the preservation of ancient monuments? They say Lenin himself compiled the list of writers and artists of the past who are to have monuments erected to commemorate their names.

*Yarmatov.* The question about proletarian culture in our party ranks and in Soviet government circles is not yet fully established. It is only in process of formation. But we are confident it will ripen soon. Take any bourgeois writer of the 19th century. They are always either counts or landowners themselves, or people who side with them. What can they teach you?

Shouts from the hall: "That's right! We're sick and tired of *Eugene Onegin!*"

Is it possible that you, proletarian women, will cry over the fate of countess Anna Karenina, this over-sexed little lady?

What do you have in common with her? Concretely speaking, what do you have in common with this seductress who seeks sexual satisfaction among the guard officers, the bulwark of tsarism.

Answer from the hall: "I don't know! She's probably a human being like myself!"

*Yarmatov.* That's just it! You see? Just what I told you! You're losing your proletarian point of view already! We don't need that kind of literature. The proletariat dumped it in the garbage can of history.

*Question.* I once saw a painting of a forest by a pre-revolutionary artist. The forest was so captivating, I felt like I was there. How should I react to such a situation?

*Yarmatov.* You liked that picture because you haven't developed a class approach to works of art. What, concretely, was the value of the painting you saw? Where does it encourage you to go? To the barricades? No! To the forest! But isn't it a bit too early to indulge in such relaxation? No, comrades, such a picture is not conducive to our struggle. You are wrong to assume by asking that question that we need beautiful paintings which affect our emotions. Of course we will need to grow beautiful forests later on! But that's a different thing altogether! Remember, comrades, the proletariat is not in need of emotion. It has no time to daydream! The proletariat needs art to create practical, concrete values now!

*Question.* And what's going to happen to the theatre?

*Yarmatov.* The old theatre must be destroyed! Anyone who fails to understand this, is incapable of understanding anything!

*Question.* What do you think of some newspapers which write that the proletariat may reproach us for destroying a lot of valuable art without first asking the proletariat itself?

*Yarmatov.* Comrades, I already said: speak for yourself and not for the proletariat! Use your own heads for a change!

*Question.* You never mentioned music. What about Tchaikovsky?

*Yarmatov.* Tchaikovsky's music, comrades, is melancholy, completely permeated with the psychology of the intellectual and is an expression of the anguish of an unfulfilled life. The proletariat has no need of such music.

*Question.* How are we to treat the intellectuals of the old regime? They sometimes offer us their services.

*Yarmatov.* Tell them: "Go back to where you came from!"

*Question.* Some of us, mostly the girls, like to read Akhmatova's poetry. What's your opinion of that?

*Yarmatov.* I'm glad you brought up Akhmatova. I had occasion to deal with her work recently. People who read Akhmatova's poetry have lost their class consciousness. They are naive enough to believe that through such literature they can develop their personalities. Personality, comrades, is developed in struggle! Her poems only nurture neuroses and resignation in young working women. Just look at Akhmatova's world! It's a world that reveals the personality of the poet. And it is quite clear where that world leads. Her latest book of poems contains the word "window" 13 times, "bedroom" 10 times, "living-room" 7 times, the words "tent", "terrace", "croquet grounds" 4 times, and there is more of the same — "rings", "muffs", "furs", "capotes", "bedsheets", "blankets"... It is narrow-minded, petty, boudoir poetry. Where's the class struggle, comrades? Where are notions familiar to the proletariat such as "bricks", "rifles", "shooting" and "the red flag"? I think the subject of Akhmatova's poetry should now be closed by the proletariat once and for all.

*Question.* I would like to ask about the great Russian poet Pushkin. He wasted a lot of time writing his poem *Eugene Onegin* but never devoted a line to the coal miners, for example. How can this be explained?

*Yarmatov.* You have to treat Pushkin with caution, comrades, because he sometimes disagreed with the tsar and didn't approve of him personally. This we have to value in the man. As for his decadence — that we reject totally. Now, about your question, comrades. Pushkin could not write about miners due to strict censorship in those times. He did, however, imply miners when he wrote about the Decembrists in his well-known poem "In the Heart of Siberian Mines..." And if you read between the lines you will see that the poet did indeed illuminate many issues. That's why, when it comes to Pushkin, you have to be very careful, very careful, comrades. Any more questions? If not, then those of you who intend to become proletarian poets, writers or artists, come up and give me your names.

Since there were no more questions, the meeting was closed. A resolution was adopted to hear a report on the same subject at the next get-together but from a different political angle.

And in conclusion the meeting heard and approved new rhyming verses of the Theatre of Agitation to mark the beginning of the campaign, for party membership re-registration and verification.

### Supplement (text of rhyming verses)

*The crowns of the maples in autumn  
Fill the forest with rustles and squeaks,  
Do you know who it is in the party  
Joined to brag he's a communist?*

*Let the wind sweep the garbage away,  
Clear the future we work for today!*

*See the fat bureaucrat on display?  
Wrangel's own representative envoy,  
With some bastards a dame by his side  
Begot with the help of Black Hundreds.*

*Let the storm keep raging today,  
Party cards will be flying away!*

*When my neighbour saw me in the doorway,  
Our Savosya stood there all alone,  
"Rid the party of black marketeers!"  
He demanded again and again!*

*Snow away, roared the wind in a fever.  
Who needs red-tape communists either!*<sup>12</sup>

## SCENE THREE

*Lenin's office. Natasha ushers in a peasant delegate.  
Lenin hastens to meet him.*

*Lenin.* How are you, comrade ... how are you?...

*Peasant.* I bring you, dear leader, deepest regards from our peasants.

*Lenin.* Thank you very much, Gerasim Sevastyanovich. How about some tea? We even have sugar today.

*Peasant.* Thank you, but I already had some.



*Lenin.* Please be seated. Mikhail Ivanovich Kalinin asked me to see you. What brings you to Moscow?

*Peasant.* Well, you see, it's about our local bosses...

*Lenin.* What do you mean?

*Peasant.* Well, it's like this. We too, elected our villagers to the Local Council, the Local Soviet, that is. But you know what they did when they got hold of the guns and rifles? Armed themselves and started pushing us around, something terrible! There's no way we can get out of the mess. Please, help us get rid of them...

*Lenin (smiling).* What do you mean — pushing you around? In what way?

*Peasant.* Just 'bout in every way you c'n imagine. Without a break! An' there's no escape! It's pretty awful. It's so bad you just want to take to your heels and get the hell out of it! Know how I got here? Had to sneak away. Oh, if they got wind of it they'd lock me up and throw away the key!

*Lenin.* But what are they doing?

*Peasant (looks around stealthily and lowers his voice).* Just about everything! Requisition property. Impose fines. Grease the palm of their own relatives. Register the wheat an' flour stocks an' then keep it all for themselves. We all chipped in to build a school fer the village. Our kids are gettin' no schoolin' at all!

*Lenin.* How has this come about? These are your people, aren't they? You elected them? (*Peasant nods.*) Didn't you pick out the best of the lot and the most honest ones?

*Peasant.* We 'lected them alright. And they're our people, that's true, but as far as being fair and honest ... that they're certainly not.

*Lenin.* And why not?

*Peasant (whispers).* 'Cause most of 'em are horse thieves an' scoundrels an' jailbirds. That's what they were under Nikolashka<sup>13</sup> an' that's what they are now!

*Lenin.* I don't understand. Let me get it straight. You elected them yourselves, didn't you?

*Peasant.* That we did.

*Lenin.* Did anyone force you to elect them?

*Peasant.* Oh, not at all! We knew very well what we were doing.

*Lenin.* Then why weren't you more careful?

*Peasant (whispers)*. It's not that. You see, we 'lected them 'cause they were the village jailbirds. And they know how to serve time!

*Lenin*. I don't understand.

*Peasant*. Well, I'll tell ya. I'll give it to ya straight. We didn't believe the new government was here to stay. The way we figured it, pretty soon some other troops'd come, maybe the Cossacks again. Then we'd really get it in the neck! And what's the first thing they'd do? Arrest the new local government! So, we figured — let 'em arrest the jailbirds! That's where they belong anyway. So that's why we elected them. They're used to spendin' their time in prison... To them jail's like home. But we, well, we're just plain farmers an' that ain't for us... But things didn't work out that way. So now we're stuck with 'em. And they sure got us over a barrel!

*Lenin (laughs)*. Well, you certainly outsmarted yourselves...

The telephone rings.

Yes? I'm busy at the moment, Alexander Dmitriyevich, I'll call you later.

*Peasant*. We sure did! And now it looks like the new government's come to stay for good, ya might say. Our neighbours elected quite a different Local Soviet Council an' they're building a school fer the kids already. But all we got're jailbirds an' thieves...

*Lenin*. How long have you had to put up with this "government" of yours?

*Peasant*. At least four months already.

*Lenin*. And you don't have a school?

*Peasant*. No. And how can anyone do a decent farmin' job now without schoolin'? That goes for our womenfolk too, 'specially the girls. They don't wanna be taken fer fools anymore when they marry. You're a pretty smart leader we have here. Why don't you think of a way out for us?

*Lenin*. Comrade Kalinin and I will try to come up with something. Only next time you hold elections, remember to choose your very best people.

*Peasant*. We sure will. Don't you worry 'bout that... Once is enough!

*Lenin*. And how do you, peasants, generally regard Soviet power?

*Peasant*. Here in the capital?

*Lenin.* Yes, here in the capital.

*Peasant.* Well, I'll tell ya. When Kolchak came, I honestly must say we sided with 'im right away. Didn't like the Bolsheviks, 'cause they took our grain and paid us state prices for it. What kind of business is that? But after we'd been under Kolchak for a while, we saw that our landowners were comin' back, grabbin' the land, an' those who opened their mouths got a bullet. So we did a lotta hard thinkin'. Seemed we had nowhere to turn. Nothin' but misery! But with the workers things work out better.

*Lenin.* Better?

*Peasant.* Well, the workers don't promise us anything good either. And the food tax is strangling us. All the same it's a little easier.

*Lenin.* Why easier?

*Peasant.* Ya see... With the workers I'm still a peasant and my own master, in a word — a human being. But with Kolchak it was the same old story — I was nothin' but a slave.

*Lenin.* I can see you've learned the hard way.

*Peasant.* Ya can say that again! That's why we decided — all of the villagers — to stick with the workers from now on.

*Lenin.* And the food tax, you say, is a burden?

*Peasant.* It hurts alright. Although now you won't hear so much as a squeak. All the guys who collect do is walk around with their briefcases. They hit everybody with the tax, makes no difference who ya are — a loafer or a hard-working peasant. Now is that fair, I ask you? An' how can ya really call us loafers when we have nothing to work with? Not even a miserable old plough to our names? Ya shouldn't pile on too much or press too hard on a poor man. That's what I say. Ya gotta be much more understanding of the poor man's life and feelings — that's the whole matter in a nutshell.

*Lenin.* I see. And even so, you stick with the workers?

*Peasant.* We do! But you tell 'em not to act so tough. They're like the bears in winter. Even if they let ya go after givin' ya a great big hug — ya're a goner... Ya gotta get the peasant interested. If ya don't he's not with ya. Ya can force me to chop wood but farmin' can't be forced. (*He rises.*) Forgive me, dear leader, fer keepin' ya so long.

*Lenin.* Oh, not at all. Thank you for the heart-to-heart talk. (*Extends his hand.*)

*Peasant.* I thank ya. An' now allow me to give your regards to our peasants at home.

*Lenin.* By all means, give them my regards!

*Peasant.* An' before I go, I want ya to know that we're gonna light a candle in church for your sake dependin' on whether ya rid us of those thievin' scoundrels or not.

*Lenin (gaily).* Light away to your heart's content.

*Peasant.* The speaker was Gerasim Sevastyanovich Zaichikov. *(He bows and leaves.)*

*Lenin (repeats).* "...the womenfolk, and especially the girls ... don't want to be taken for fools anymore when they marry..." Hm!... "Ya gotta be much more understanding of the poor man's life and feelings"... Hm! "The new government's come to stay, for good, ya might say" ... How well put! *(Takes up the phone.)* Give me Tsyurupa, please. Alexander Dmitriyevich, I'll see you now. *(To the audience.)* Alexander Dmitriyevich Tsyurupa, the People's Commissar for Food Supplies. A year later he became Vladimir Ilyich's Deputy in the Council of People's Commissars. A peer, a comrade-in-arms and a close friend, he outlived Lenin only by four years. Tsyurupa's every day of work was an act of heroism, taxing to the extreme his own ailing heart. Despite the loss of men working in the food requisitioning units, he managed somehow to find enough bread to feed the country. And this man who controlled the entire food supplies of the nation once fainted of hunger at a meeting of the Council. Cynics may dismiss that as affectation. How little they understand! For men like Tsyurupa life meant sharing the life of the people.

*Tsyurupa and a young official of the Council of People's Commissars walk in.*

*Tsyurupa.* Vladimir Ilyich, let me show you what cutting administrative personnel really means!

*Lenin.* What's wrong with it?

*Tsyurupa.* Semyon Ilyich here has submitted a report claiming tremendous success! But this "success" is based on a pack of lies and outright fraud!

*Young official.* Alexander Dmitriyevich, don't be so dramatic!...

*Tsyurupa.* Dramatic? I'll say your achievements are dramatic! Correspondents you reduced by 70 per cent and air pilots of the Agricultural Department by 100 per cent!

*Lenin.* Pilots? What do pilots have to do with the Agricultural Department anyway?

*Young official.* They combat pests.

*Lenin.* But what were they doing in the Department itself? I can understand their use in the fields but not in the Department offices. Whom did they combat there?

*Young official.* They were loafing around and so they were finally chucked out.

*Lenin.* That's an amusing story. And there was a 100 per cent reduction? How many were there in the first place?

*Young official (after some hesitation).* One.

Lenin can no longer contain himself and begins to laugh — the situation is so ridiculous. The young official joins him.

*Tsyurupa.* And as for the rest of the reduction — it's more of the same. The total figure for Moscow is 40 per cent!

*Lenin.* I'm beginning to smell something fishy... Let me have a look... Oh! What a slick operation... So 500 supervisors have been dismissed and 1,200 inspectors were employed in their place? Tell me what's the difference between supervisors and inspectors.

*Tsyurupa.* None that I know of.

*Lenin.* So, some more slight of hand. The trick is to give it another name. Hmm. Wonderful... Wonderful.

*Tsyurupa.* And as a result, after many months of cutting down personnel in central government offices their number in Moscow alone has increased by two thousand. And Semyon Ilyich has covered up this disgrace with his signature...

*Lenin.* What made you laugh, Semyon Ilyich? We put you in charge of this department hoping that...

*Young official (smiles).* I relied on my secretariat and didn't bother ... to check myself. They were obviously overwhelmed by the statistical data.

*Lenin.* They were overwhelmed. And you didn't bother to check. And signed this fraudulent paper. Hoping for what?

The young official is silent.

How could this happen, Semyon Ilyich? Did someone put you up to it?

*Young official.* You see, Vladimir Ilyich, many Department heads want to make a good impression — to be among the topmost fulfillers of government decrees and ahead of time ... so, some try to dress things up just a bit...



*Lenin.* They do what?

*Young official.* You know, dress it up, make it look a little better than it is... Oh, I can understand that. Our comrades are having a hard time of it. They're up to their ears in work...

*Lenin.* The comrades are having a hard time? And the workers who go hungry because of your glowing reports — they have it easy?

*Young official.* But why look at it that way?

*Tsyurupa.* More personnel means more food rations.

*Young official.* But in terms of the entire nation these are really trifles.

*Lenin.* If by such "trifles" we could save even one worker from a hungry death, that alone would be worth cutting down administrative personnel. We can afford to lose everything, Semyon Ilyich, except the trust of the people. It is, if you like, the basic capital of our party. We can get back Byelorussia and Lithuania eventually — in fact anything — but the trust of the people... Aren't you forgetting that?

*The young official is silent.*

So it is not only a matter of your relying on your secretariat and not checking statistics... Whom are you trying to deceive, Semyon Ilyich?

*Young official.* You did not quite understand me, Vladimir Ilyich... You yourself sometimes try to meet people halfway when there are good reasons to do so. It seems to me in this case it was also done with the best intentions in mind. We have experienced people heading our Departments, tried Bolsheviks, and if they employ people, it must be for good reason.

*Lenin.* I would very much like to understand just in what way all this was done with the best interests in mind... We adopt decrees. Then you get in touch with your cronies and reduce these decrees to meaningless paper. Why should we publish your glowing reports in *Pravda*? To make people whisper and laugh behind our backs? They read our statement knowing the real state of affairs very well. One of the most glaring contradictions in the society of the past was the gap between words and deeds. Everything was described in the best possible light in the papers but when you looked around you could clearly see what the repulsive reality of the hypocritical bourgeois society was actually like. Where are you trying to take us, Semyon Ilyich?

The young official is silent.

Our principle is to give the truth to the working masses. Even if we stand to lose as a result. Truth should not depend on whom it serves. We shall be invincible only if we always stand up for the truth whatever turn history may take, and do not resort to wishful thinking or lie out of so-called "tactical" considerations. Our people are capable of heroism and will endure the greatest of odds if only truth reigns throughout.

All are silent.

No, unless we go through a genuine school of communism, we shall accomplish nothing. Look at the peasant! He's got some of that schooling through hard knocks. No Kolchak can fool him again! He had to try out things for himself, to learn from his own experience, to draw his own conclusions. While in our party there are still too many ... who did not really join ... they just signed up. What can you expect from such members? Members like that are ready to do anything — to write "glowing" reports, and even worse...

*Young official.* Believe me, you're taking this silly incident much too seriously. There's nothing to it, I assure you.

There's a long tense silence. *Lenin* struggles to restrain himself. *Natasha* enters carrying a kettle of water.

*Natasha (to Tsyurupa).* Alexander Dmitriyevich, you're wanted on the direct line.

*Lenin.* Alexander Dmitriyevich, let's ask the Department of Labour to set a given number of ration cards for each Department irrespective of the present number of its personnel. It's the only way to get the matter off the ground.

*Tsyurupa.* I agree. *(He leaves.)*

*Lenin (calmly).* Today I've received a letter from Columbia... *(He takes the letter from the table and begins to read.)* "Either you will transform the world, achieving victory by establishing communism or you will bury the ideals of Bolshevism if you fail." Tell me, Semyon Ilyich, do you appreciate this responsibility?

*Young official.* That, Vladimir Ilyich, is an insulting question to ask...

*Lenin.* Oh, stop it!... We're not blushing young ladies!

Let's discuss it man to man. The easiest part of what history placed on our shoulders was the beginning. You are a young man and upon your generation has fallen the most difficult task of all — to build! And if you are not successful, history will question us, too. The success of our cause lies in your hands! So, don't you think it is natural for us to want to see that those hands are clean and competent?

*Young official.* Vladimir Ilyich...

*Lenin.* You've showed your mettle during the October Revolution but now you are covering up for bureaucracy! You, an educated Bolshevik, are engaged in outright communist lying! You regard yourself as cultured but behave quite indecently.

*Young official.* Vladimir Ilyich...

*Lenin.* I would despise myself if I didn't tell you just how I feel about this. If you were not so young, I believe I would have to bring you before a party tribunal!

*Young official (in an outburst).* Please don't make any allowances for my youth!

*Lenin (fiercely).* Then...

*Lenin* contains himself with an effort, turns sharply and goes to his desk. He collides with *Natasha*. She has a kettle and tries to pour some water from it on Vladimir Ilyich's head.

And what do you think you are doing?

*Natasha.* It's ... the cold water...

*Lenin.* What water?

*Natasha.* You asked me to ... to get some cold water ... and ... to pour it on ... your head ... your poor, wretched head ... as you put it...

*Lenin.* I meant the sculpture! The sculptured head! The clay! It dries and cracks!

*Natasha.* But the way you said it...

*Lenin.* I beg your pardon, *Natasha* dear. My mistake. It's not this head. It's that one.

*Natasha* goes to the bust.

*Young official.* May I leave?

*Lenin.* Yes. (*He waits till the young official leaves and the door closes behind him*).

*Natasha*, just a minute, please. Pour some of that water into a glass.

*Natasha.* You're not feeling well, Vladimir Ilyich?

*Lenin.* It's nothing at all! Just let me have the water! Please... Thank you.

*Natasha.* Let me call the...

*Lenin.* No, it's alright now. I'm just a little tired. A short rest and I'll be alright. (*He sits on the windowsill at the open window.*)

*Natasha.* You gave me quite a scare...

*Lenin.* It's nothing to worry about. I'm all right now!

*Natasha.* You need a vacation for a whole month without thinking about politics. That's what you need!

*Lenin (pensively).* Without thinking about politics... Oh, Natasha, you're asking for too much!... Any news from Riga?

*Natasha.* No. Feel better now?

*Lenin.* Much better. Now, don't let anyone know about this... Promise?

*Natasha.* But is that the right thing to do?

*Lenin.* Absolutely right.

*Natasha.* Well then, I promise.

*Lenin.* What was that woman's name? The one from the Moscow City Soviet.

*Natasha.* Sapozhnikova.

*Lenin.* And she says I know her?

*Natasha.* You spoke to her at some meeting or other.

*Lenin.* Sapozhnikova. No, I don't recall the name. But what is the trouble?

*Natasha.* I don't exactly know, but she faces disciplinary arrest for thirty-six hours.

*Lenin.* Nothing from Riga. I wonder why? You know what, Natasha? Call her and tell her she may come at eight.

*Natasha.* But you were going for a walk at eight.

*Lenin.* I'll go tomorrow.

*Natasha.* And for such a trifling matter you...

*Lenin.* Wrong, Natasha. On such trifles a human life may depend. Let her come.

*The young official enters the room.*

*Young official.* Forgive me, Vladimir Ilyich...

*Lenin.* I'm all ears.

*Young official.* I understand. I understand it now.

*Lenin (after a silence).* Semyon Ilyich... Nobody in the world can compromise the communists if they do not compromise themselves. Nobody in the world can stop the victory of communism if we don't stop it ourselves.

## PART TWO

### DOCUMENTS FROM THE YEAR 1920

#### Debates

"SUBJECT OF TODAY'S DEBATE IS 'PROBLEMS OF SEX DURING THE TRANSITION PERIOD FROM CAPITALISM TO SOCIALISM AS SEEN BY THE YOUTH OF THE KRASNAYA PRESNYA DISTRICT IN MOSCOW'. CHAIRMAN AND SPEAKER — TIKHONOV-LUGOVOI.

ALSO PRESENT ARE DR. EPSTEIN OF THE MOSCOW PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT, ZYABLIKOVA FROM THE DISTRICT YCL, MEMBERS AND NON-MEMBERS OF YCL OF BOTH SEXES".

*Tikhonov-Lugovoi.* Dear Comrades! The question of love, and sex, which is closely linked with it, is vital to all young people in our Republic. Therefore we Marxists should not shrink from dealing with the issue on both the theoretical and practical levels. Our Great Revolution has destroyed the old society with its filthy and hypocritical sex morality. For a long time a protest has been raging in our hearts against bourgeois sex relations, against mountains of lies as high as Mt. Everest, the bourgeoisie has been attempting to erect in the field of sexual ethics. We all stand for freedom of love, for the satisfaction of this natural biological urge connected with the need of sexual gratification. We refuse to conceal it under the garb of bourgeois marriage, civil regulations, documentation or any other forms of prejudice. With us communists everything should be as simple and natural as life itself. This, of course, includes the satisfaction of the love instinct. Only when sexual problems do not distract them from the construction of a new world, will



people be completely free. I insist that for proletarian youth love must not absorb their time. It must not weigh on their minds! The situation is absolutely different for the bourgeois youth with their Philistine morals. Just look at some bourgeois young man or woman in their so-called period of puberty. They spend the whole day brooding in the office or at school. They sigh, dream, write love letters and in the evening rush to their anxiously awaited dates. The young man spends a lot of time declaring the purity of his love while the young lady, her heart melting, keeps gazing at him with approval. But at the most she allows him to kiss her hand. This bourgeois young woman reared in an atmosphere of outdated patriarchal obscurity and utter stagnation, would never allow anything more. And why? Because biological satisfaction for her is connected with marriage, registration, formalities, great expectations for a snug family life and lavish furnishings, flower pots, canary cages, lace curtains and other similar symbols of Philistine virtues. But since the young man is eighteen or twenty, sighs and kisses for him are by far not enough. So, what does he do, comrades? He goes straight from this rhapsodic date with his sweetheart to gratify his sexual urge elsewhere. He goes straight to Trubny Square, to Tverskoi Boulevard, to whorehouses, to prostitutes. There he gets the second half of his love. But with working-class youth things are altogether different. You don't find young workers on Strastnoi Square or on Tverskoi Boulevard. Those who hang out there are slick young coxcombs in pince-nezs or monocles, all spruced up and haggling for the cheapest prostitutes. You never run into working-class youth out there! Each has his own girl. Socially they are cut out from the same cloth. Both know all there is to know about poverty, both work together and their relations are simple and straightforward! The young man gets his wages, gives half of them to his parents and from the other half buys his girl, Manya, a pair of shoes, a ticket to the movies or takes her out to a dance. Their relations have no ups or downs, no disparity of emotions, no shilly-shallying or any such thing. And if they happen to break up, the girl switches over to one of her boy-friend's pals, another solid worker. And there's no tragedy! No emotional mess! No complications! These are proletarians! It is appropriate to ask: which is worse — our modest proletarian girl on the job, who is friendly with her class comrade or tomorrow perhaps with one of his pals or the capricious bourgeois

beauty, who preserves her innocence waiting for a rich bridegroom and a prospective well-placed husband? The immorality of such innocence is obvious. Comrades, today we can already note as a positive phenomenon that the freer a Komsomol girl's behaviour and the less she boasts of her female qualities, the more simple and friendly are her male friends towards her. And we never see them treating such a girl as a broad. Their entire life is devoted to their work and to the struggle for a new society. That is why, contrary to this false bourgeois sex morality, Marxism already offers today a theory of its own, namely: the satisfaction of biological urges in society should be as simple as drinking a glass of water. And those of us who lead such a life are tangibly helping to bring nearer our long-awaited future!

*Doctor Epstein (from his seat).* Oh, why did I have to live to see this!

## THE DEBATES

*Goncharov.* I'm a worker of the Prokhorovskaya textile mill. Comrades, I like the report very much because it absolutely clarifies a complex question. I'll tell you what it means to me personally. Of course, every proletarian, every Komsomol member, should satisfy his sexual desires. Sexual abstinence should be regarded as reactionary Philistinism. Every Komsomol girl, every female working student, every female proletarian who is chosen by a male Komsomol member must respond as a class and a party comrade. Otherwise she is a Philistine and is unworthy of being a member of the Komsomol. When the female part of our League begins to realise this, we'll start making tremendous headway.

*Khristovoi.* I'm a student. And I believe that among the young women Komsomol members things are not as our speaker described. I heard Tikhonov-Lugovoi once before and as a practical person decided to familiarise myself with the views of our young women Komsomol members themselves on the question of sex. So I said to a girl once that, since we were both supposed to be unprejudiced and grown up — both of us are twenty — I wasn't going to beat around the bush and expected her to treat me properly, as a comrade. You know what she said? Or rather where she sent me? I got off lucky because I happen to be a good runner. And I got the same treatment from all the YCL girls I ap-

proached! Of course, our girls don't always restrain themselves but you gotta work at it awfully hard — at least two weeks sometimes to dazzle 'em and hook 'em! Personally I don't get a kick out of the fact that some female Komsomol members are easy marks. I despise a girl who lets herself be deceived! But one of them put it this way: "Don't you see, you idiot, we all want to be loved and that's why we sometimes land in a mess." But I think the reason why female Komsomol members refuse to satisfy both themselves and the male members is that they're afraid of getting pregnant. Therefore I want to stress the need for public nurseries. We'll produce the babies and turn them over to the state. That should please the government because the state will have a bigger population and it can bring the kids up any way it wants. Everyone's gonna be pleased because then we combine the satisfaction of the biological urge with useful social activity. That's what I have to say on the subject.

*Vodonosov.* Let Khristovoi and the speaker tell us what's the difference between human beings and pigs?

*Pivovarova.* I'm a high school teacher. So far we've dealt only with Komsomol members and urged them towards sexual promiscuity as a mark of the future society. But as a young teacher I would like to say I think the speaker is all mixed up, although the problem we face now has been correctly defined. This concerns not only Komsomol members. Our comrades of the older generation are also affected. They regard sex as something superficial, something short-lived. They view with disdain the very words husband and wife as old hat smacking of Philistinism. They are insulted when someone asks them: "Where does your wife work?" and reply with a smirk: "Which wife?" I knew a top-ranking Soviet official who had a wife every place he worked. He changed them like he changed jobs. You know what he told me when I questioned his way of life? He said — "You're too young to know what is right and what is wrong. You see, to one woman I'm attracted psychologically, to another — physically, and to a third — well, it's a bit of both." To top it off he said I was a fool and a Philistine myself, too simple to appreciate the fine points of his communist view on sex.

*Narenkova.* I work at the Prokhorovskaya textile mill. Our speaker made it seem all so simple, so smooth-going! Yes, but not in real life! Who's going to pay for all this cute Komsomol sport? Us, women! Or have you forgotten some of the facts of life? Then I'll remind you! About the buds and the bees. Oh, you remember? Then why do you forget about

them when you're out on your own? Flitting from one flower to another like bees! Knocking up girls by the dozen! That's why there's so many abortions today! Who gave you the right to destroy the health of our women? For after all — they are the source of life! I never read Marx but I can't believe he could have written such things! Who gave you the right to deprive us of freedom? As soon as he looks at me I have to oblige! The nerve! And if I don't — I'm a Philistine! Look who's talking! Look at yourself! Both the speaker and you too, Goncharov! No self-respecting woman would even look at you twice! You invented your theory about the "glass of water" to make it easier for yourselves! As for me — I'll give it to you straight: I'll live with the man I love! And it's not for the Komsomol to order our lives for us. If I want a baby I'll have it! I don't need you more'n ten minutes for that anyway! The rest I can do myself! I'll bring it up if I need to! We made our revolution so women could get their freedom too! So they could decide what they wanna do with their life! What was that? I'm against Marx? Maybe your kind of Marx, not my kind of Marx, the one with the beard! He suits me fine!

*Chairman.* Doctor Epstein, do you want the floor?

*Epstein.* I've already spoken my mind.

*Chairman.* Then put down Dr. Epstein's remark in the minutes: "Oh, why did I have to live to see this?" The debate is hereby declared closed.

**"DUE TO WIDE DISPARITY OF VIEWS IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE TO ADOPT A RESOLUTION ON THE REPORT. HOWEVER, THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION WAS ADOPTED UNANIMOUSLY: ALL PRESENT AT THE DEBATE, INCLUDING THE SPEAKER, VOLUNTEER TO WORK WITHOUT PAY THE NIGHT SHIFT AT THE PETROVSKY DEPOT TO HELP THE RAILWAY WORKERS".**

**"LONG LIVE WELL-KEPT TRAINS REPAIRED BY COMMUNIST LABOUR!"**

**"FIGHT HUNGER AND COLD BY LABOUR AND DISCIPLINE!"**

## SCENE FOUR

The kitchen of Lenin's apartment in the Kremlin also serving as the dining-room. Actresses who play the parts of *Nadezhda Konstantinovna* and *Maria Ilyinichna Ulyanova*, Lenin's sister, are busy preparing a meal. Near one of the wings the spotlight catches the *Actress* who plays the part of *Clara Zetkin*.

*Actress.* Clara Zetkin found Lenin's wife and sister setting the table for supper and was invited to join them.

*Ulyanova.* Please, do come in, Clara. We always get together in the kitchen. It's so cozy!

*Krupskaya.* Do sit down. In Russia we say: we are glad to share what we have.

*Zetkin (enters the kitchen and sits down).* Thank you.

*Ulyanova.* Nadya, don't you think we should serve something special for the occasion?

*Krupskaya.* There should be some jam in the cupboard.

*Zetkin.* Please don't bother. It's really not necessary... (*Speaks to the audience.*) Clara Zetkin had not seen Krupskaya for almost five years. Her pleasant face and soft kind eyes bore traces of a treacherous incurable disease that was sapping her strength. Otherwise she was her usual self — straightforward, simple and modest. She shared Lenin's thoughts and outlook and was one with him in his unwavering dedication to the common goal. She worked in the Department of Education, dealing like him with many duties of state, and looked after her husband with motherly care together with his sister Maria. Maria worked as organisational secretary of *Pravda's* editorial board. It was they who made Lenin's quarters in the Kremlin a home. Of course this had nothing to do with the German Philistine concept of the word. The spiritual atmosphere reigning there made it home! An atmosphere of truth and sincerity, deep understanding and warmth prevailed here. With Lenin's arrival there was pleasant banter. Clara felt at ease and at home. However, knowing her own character, she kept repeating to herself: "I mustn't start an argument, it's so long since we saw each other".

*Lenin enters.*

*Lenin.* Hello, Clara!

*Zetkin.* I'm so glad to see you, my dear friend!

*Ulyanova.* Volodya, please don't start arguing right away!



It's so long since you saw each other ... and anyway, Clara is our guest!

*Lenin.* No, never! I swear! (*To Zetkin*). What are my womenfolk treating you to? Jam! Clara, do come more often! Real jam! Mother used to make jam just like that.

*Zetkin (smiles).* Genosse Lenin, you should be above such trifles.

*Lenin.* Actually, I am beneath them. Oh, I repent! I conducted a sharp week-long struggle against myself and that jam! And as you see, I won! Otherwise we would have nothing to offer you.

*Zetkin (in the same spirit of banter).* I always took you for a very consistent person. Now I see you too are not, without your contradictions and inconsistencies.

*Lenin.* My consistency, Clara, is just a myth! I'm a classic example of the split personality. When Goethe said: "Two souls have settled in my heart", he had me in mind. I'm torn by contradictions. For example, since childhood I just hate shining shoes, but I also hate wearing unshined ones and can't stand others doing it. There are times, Clara, I don't see any way out of this contradiction. Nadya alone comes to my rescue. She sees my suffering and offers the only solution — get a brush. And I do. I swear and curse but shine away at those damn shoes of mine, so help me!

*Zetkin (smiling).* You're a terrible tease!

*Lenin.* No! I swear it's the truth! (*To Krupskaya*). What's this you're doing?

*Krupskaya.* Maria has brought the proofs of an article. It deals with your life — all fifty years of it. So, we're looking over some photographs for it.

*Lenin.* What kind of an article?

*Krupskaya.* Oh, just a lot of nonsense!

*Ulyanova.* Well, not entirely, Nadya.

*Krupskaya.* I could tear it to pieces! The facts are wrong and the whole thing's hopeless!

*Lenin (going through the photos, showing them to Zetkin).* My father! He died before my brother's arrest and execution. I really don't think he would have been able to take it...

*Ulyanova.* Mother was the stronger of the two. She had tremendous willpower.

*Lenin.* You know, Clara, all our acquaintances cut us off. They were even afraid to say hello when they met us in the street. Crossed to the other side. There was an old teacher,

who would drop in for a game of chess in the evenings ... like clockwork. I sat in the dining-room, straining my ears for the sound of his footsteps at seven but he never showed up. Neither that evening nor the next. Nor ever again. I just couldn't understand it at the time... Then I realised what it meant to be a relative of a prisoner in Russia. On the one hand, there was fear, on the other — help and compassion...

*Krupskaya (to Ulyanova).* And what does the article say about this? It makes me blush to read it! After all, where do you get your moral strength if not from your family? That's especially true of Russians.

*Lenin (handing photos to Zetkin).* And this is mother!

*Krupskaya.* We haven't visited her grave for a long time now.

*Lenin.* In winter I'm going to Petrograd.

*Ulyanova (to Zetkin).* And this is Nadya before she went to Shushenskoye... It's a village in Siberia where they were exiled.

*Krupskaya (giving it a cursory glance).* Oh, I look awful!

*Ulyanova.* No, you don't! You were very pretty. Tell her, Volodya.

*Krupskaya.* And the things the writer of the article has to say about Shushenskoye! It's both laughable and embarrassing. According to him all we did was talk about the Revolution and translate into Russian the Webbs' book on trade unions. Reading him, you'd never know we were young, just married and head over heels in love! At first there was nothing but the ecstasy of young passionate love. He's just silly, I tell you, Maria. Let him remember when he was young.

*Lenin* kisses her hand.

*Ulyanova.* What should I say to the writer?

*Lenin.* Well, tell him to follow Gogol's example <sup>14</sup> and burn it! I'm sure the coming generation will be able to survive the loss.

*Ulyanova.* Oh, please, stop joking. I'm serious, Volodya. And why don't you tell us, for a change, what Doctor Obukh said?

*Lenin.* Like I told you, there's nothing serious. I should take regular walks, rest up and all that. I called to tell you right after he left but couldn't reach anyone.

*Krupskaya.* I was at a railway workers' meeting. They all spoke in such clichés. I wish they'd spoken more naturally.

Finally one worker came up with: "Soviet Russia's invincible 'cause it's square and vast."

*Lenin.* I wish that boast could also be applied to literacy and culture, not only territory.

*Zetkin.* Genosse Lenin, you should not complain so bitterly about Russia's illiteracy. For you, Bolsheviks, this illiteracy was even beneficial in some respects. Yes, yes, it was illiteracy that helped bring about the revolution.

*Lenin.* In what way?

*Zetkin.* It protected the minds of the workers and peasants from the assaults of bourgeois propaganda. You planted your Bolshevik seeds in virgin soil. It is easier to sow and harvest when you don't have to first uproot primeval forests.

*Lenin (after a silence).* I don't agree with you, Clara. We never staked on illiteracy. An illiterate person is beyond politics. We could get by to some extent with illiteracy when we were struggling for power and had to destroy the old state apparatus. But did we destroy merely for the sake of destruction? No! We destroyed to build something better. Illiteracy is completely incompatible with the tasks of construction. It's a dead end. And today we are a nation of paupers who are almost totally illiterate...

*Krupskaya.* But Volodya, so much is being done now. (*To Zetkin*). We are literally waging war against illiteracy. Our weapons are libraries, reading-rooms, mobile schools...

*Lenin.* But it's only a drop in our ocean of illiteracy! We need another October — a cultural revolution, and mobilising our young people in the war against illiteracy.

*Krupskaya.* The teachers themselves need teaching.

*Ulyanova.* But not the kind of teaching they seem to be getting now.

*Krupskaya.* I should say not!

*Zetkin (with great interest).* And what do they teach them now?

*Ulyanova.* Some say everything has been destroyed. We have to start from scratch. The culture of the past is worthless.

*Zetkin.* Meaning what?

*Ulyanova.* Meaning — down with Pushkin, down with Raphael, down with Dante!

*Zetkin.* And who decides what should remain?

*Ulyanova.* Well, recently some charlatans have invented something they think they can call proletarian culture and are parading it about like some new toy. The Depart-

ment of Education is much too lenient. It's afraid to lift a finger.

*Krupskaya.* We must fight against dishonest people, but the difficulty is that many who are taken in are quite sincere.

*Ulyanova.* It's a very complex situation, Clara. It's not so easy to sort things out. (*Speaks to the audience*). In a few days Vladimir Ilyich will say: "Proletarian culture does not suddenly appear from nowhere. Proletarian culture must arise on the basis of the objective development of the sum total of human knowledge achieved by mankind..." He will emphasise again and again that people should not stuff their heads with nonsense but should take and develop the best examples, traditions and cultural achievements of the past. These ideas, however, will not be accepted or understood by everybody at once. Passions will seethe for some time to come.

*Lenin (with irony).* You're just too old to understand the demands of the young generation.

*Ulyanova.* Do you understand them?

*Lenin.* No, I'm too old for that, too!

*Ulyanova.* Here's an example of those "demands" of the young generation... Here's an announcement in *Pravda*. (*She reaches into a pile of papers.*) "A debate is to be held next Friday 'On the Problems of Sex During the Transition Period from Capitalism to Socialism as Seen by the Youth of the Krasnaya Presnya District in Moscow'." They even found some idiot of a speaker. And you know what? The hall was packed full of young people!

*Krupskaya.* Indeed... (*Reads.*) "...as Seen by the Youth of the Krasnaya Presnya District in Moscow."

*Lenin (laughing).* What did you expect? Here the territorial principle is of utmost importance. Sexual maturity in Sokolniki is one thing, and in Krasnaya Presnya it's something quite different. And as for Khamovniki ... three miles away ... well, well...

*Ulyanova.* Nadya says, you can hardly find standing room at such debates. They sit there till daybreak, stripping off, so to speak, in public. Poor Doctor Epstein was speechless. All he could say was: "Oh, why did I have to live to see this?!"

*Lenin (laughing).* Is that what he said? Well, good for Epstein! He couldn't have put it better!

*Zetkin.* But perhaps there's nothing harmful in these dis-

cussions. Maybe you're overstating the case a bit? Because even through such discussions it's possible to arrive at conclusions based on historical materialism.

*Lenin (gaily)*. What's that, Clara? Come on, let's hear it! It seems to be a very novel and, I must admit, a very interesting and original approach to historical materialism.

*Zetkin (smiling)*. Genosse Lenin, not so fast with your irony. I'm really serious. Don't you believe that a Marxist analysis of sexual problems in bourgeois society can gradually lead to an analysis of society itself and the conclusion that "Carthage must indeed be destroyed"? Well? You try and prove me wrong.

*Ulyanova*. Well, Volodya, now you've really had it!

*Lenin (with warmth)*. Clara you are a good defender of your party comrades and you're my dear friend, but truth is even more precious. What you say is justified but only on one condition — that the analysis is truly Marxist! Can you guarantee that? You need real scholars for that. But where can you get them now? Do you have them? Or do we? Without them it is all reduced to playing with these issues, not to historical materialism!

*Zetkin*. Well, if you put it like that I share your concern. Moreover, in Berlin I even took issue with my own people for overemphasising the problems of sex. But a prophet is never recognised in his own country, so I was merely reprimanded for Philistinism.

*Lenin*. Don't let that bother you in the least! I was also suspected of Philistinism and hypocrisy as regards these problems. I take it in my stride. We'll survive it!

*Krupskaya*. But all the same, Volodya, you can't deny that our young people today are very much occupied with these questions.

*Lenin*. I regret to say it's true, Clara. Unfortunately, a great number of our young people are very busy with the so-called revision of bourgeois views on sex. I must also add that this involves a rather large section of our best and really promising youth... It's a kind of infantile disorder... It will pass of course, but...

*Zetkin*. Why does it disturb you so? Let's look at the problem like Marxists. First, there was the war. Then — the revolution. The customary way of life has been uprooted! Everything turned upside down. Old values have been shattered and lost their restraining hold on people. New values are just beginning to emerge. The filth of bourgeois marriage, the



glaring falsity of the sex mores of the old world has filled most decent people with revulsion. They are against this filth. Especially young people. A bit too violently? Perhaps! But that's one of the features of youth. Don't you think that while it may be crudely expressed, it is, nevertheless, essentially a protest against the bourgeoisie and its spiritual values?

*Lenin.* But don't you think that the overwhelming thirst for greater diversity of pleasure has gone too far? That it is too often covered up by the so-called "glass of water theory" that is literally driving our youth out of their minds. It's a theory that has ruined the lives of many young men and women. Somebody told them that this is a Marxist theory. Spare us such Marxism, if you please! I am not at all a gloomy ascetic but the so-called new sexual life of the youth and adults, if you please, very often seems to me genuinely bourgeois and in reality just another "respectable" version of bourgeois prostitution! That is where this protest you speak of ultimately leads to.

*Krupskaya.* Nor should we overlook the social aspect of the "glass of water theory" before it gets completely out of hand. Drinking water, after all, is an individual act. But a relationship of love involves two persons. And from them comes another life. That can be hardly overlooked.

*Lenin.* No! No! All this has nothing in common with freedom of love as we communists understand it.

*Zetkin.* Genosse Lenin, and how do we communists understand freedom of love?

*Lenin.* It's just too bad Inessa Fyodorovna Armand is not here now! We had a heated discussion with her in 1915 when she wrote a pamphlet on the subject.

*Zetkin.* And where is Comrade Armand now?

*Lenin.* We made her leave Moscow for a much needed rest in Kislovodsk in the Caucasus. She's there now vacationing with her son. (*Speaks to the audience as Actor.*) None of them were aware that at that very moment a telegram was being flashed across Russia bearing ten terrible words: "Comrade Inessa died. It was not possible to save her." The sad news would only descend on them the next day. It would be only the following evening they would learn her killer was cholera. Two weeks later at three o'clock in the morning they would meet her zinc coffin at the Kazan railway terminal. The coffin would be placed in a hearse and Vladimir Ilyich would firmly say: "I will follow the coffin

on foot." No one would dare to object. And together with Nadezhda Konstantinovna they would walk behind the coffin across Moscow, which was just awakening from its sleep. Later thousands of people would pass by the closed coffin in the blue hall of the House of Trade Unions. No one would ever see the once exalted beauty of this remarkable woman, a dear friend and comrade in struggle of Lenin and Krupskaya during many long and difficult years. After her death, as during her life, she was known in the party simply as Inessa. A wreath by the coffin bore the simple inscription: "To Comrade Inessa from Lenin." But all this would happen later, after the telegram arrived in the morning...

*Zetkin.* Genosse Lenin, I repeat, how do we communists understand freedom of love?

*Lenin. (reflecting).* At any rate it is not freedom from what is genuine in love. Or the freedom of adultery. It is clearly freedom from material and financial considerations in love... A freedom from material burdens ... from religious and social prejudice... From a father's arbitrary restrictions ... from the enforced bonds of the law, the courts and the police ... It is the complete freedom of the human being at any time to say "no"... One could go on. Many subtleties are involved here. Inessa argued some of these fine points with me. She wrote me that she thought even incidental passion or a passing affair may be more romantic and genuinely pure than the loveless kissing of a vulgar and shallow married couple.

*Zetkin.* Don't you think that's true?

*Lenin.* It has always seemed to me that, from the point of view of logic, kissing without love should be placed in contrast to kissing with love, and an empty marriage without love to a marriage based on love. As for incidental passing affairs — they too may either be absolutely pure or utterly degrading.

*Zetkin (surprised).* Incidental passing affairs?...

*Krupskaya.* But doesn't this happen, Clara? One can't ignore what happens in life.

*Zetkin.* I suppose you're right. Oh, what a complex question it is! And how easy it is to lose one's way and be rightly accused of hypocrisy! Good heavens, I feel terribly displeased with myself!

*Ulyanova.* They also confused the issue rather badly at the debate. On one scale they placed a proletarian woman leading a promiscuous sexual life and on the other — a bourgeois

woman who will not even look at anyone but a prospective wealthy husband. And the entire evening they tried to determine who was worse.

*Lenin.* Unfortunately both young women really belong on the same side of the scales. So both are worse! It seems to me that in sex not only one's natural instincts find expression but the influences of human civilisation on the individual as well. And because of this everything is either on a lofty level or completely base... Either you yearn for a Pushkin or a Tolstoy or you will be quite satisfied with cheap pulp literature and a set of coarse anecdotes. Yes, that's putting it in a nutshell — culture's the word! Culture! There is no other way! (*He is silent.*) Today we have a million problems. Some people see everything in hopelessly gloomy colours. But we know how to dream! You will see! We shall yet amaze the world with our achievements, and in culture too!

The telephone in the hall rings. *Ulyanova* goes to answer it.

*Zetkin.* Genosse Lenin, you are a dreamer, a romantic! No, more — a visionary!

*Lenin.* Of course I am a visionary, Clara! How could anyone even begin a revolution in such a country as Russia without being a dreamer and a romantic? I want to believe we shall win, Clara, you'll see! And when we succeed, in order to correctly understand and appraise just what the Bolsheviks were able to do for this country, I would like people to look back and recall this hungry and bitterly cold year of 1920. (*He smiles*).

*All I regret — is those wonderful days  
Neither of us will be destined to see...*<sup>15</sup>

However, cheer up, Clara! If in some ways we happen to be old-fashioned we have managed to retain the youthful spirit of the revolution!

*Ulyanova* (*in the doorway*). It's a call from Riga, Volodya.

*Lenin.* Please excuse me. (*He leaves quickly.*)

*Krupskaya.* Would you like a cup of tea, Clara?

*Zetkin.* No, thank you. How accurately John Reed characterised him: "An unusual popular leader, a leader purely by virtue of intellect."

*Lenin* returns. He is gloomy, deep in thought.

*Lenin.* New Polish peace terms.

*Krupskaya.* Tough ones?

*Lenin.* Tough for us — good for them.

*Zetkin.* And what is your decision?

*Lenin.* It's up to the Central Committee to decide. It will not be easy. I will have to face a fierce struggle with the comrades just as during the Brest-Litovsk negotiations<sup>16</sup> with the Germans. We could probably hold out this winter. However, we still have to confront Wrangel. There are many considerations, but one is overriding: can we, unless out of sheer necessity, subject the Russian people to the horrors and suffering of another winter campaign? Our people have endured such deprivations, have put up with so much! We've been at war since 1914! And to go on now! Again to the battlefield! Again go hungry! Again freeze to death! Die in silent despair! No, the mere thought of the horrors of war is unbearable to me...

#### DOCUMENTS FROM THE YEAR 1920

"GLORY TO OUR FALLEN HEROES OF THE REVOLUTION! LET THE LIVING LIFT THEIR BANNER HIGH!"

"THE MOSCOW COMMITTEE OF THE YOUNG COMMUNIST LEAGUE OF RUSSIA ANNOUNCES WITH DEEP REGRET TO OUR MEMBERS, OUR SUPPORTERS AND TO THE WORLD THAT AFTER BEING SERIOUSLY WOUNDED BY A WHITEGUARD BULLET AT THE FRONT, COMRADE ANATOLI PEROV, ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF THE MOSCOW ORGANIZATION, DIED. HE WAS 21 YEARS OLD."

#### ANATOLI PEROV

"AND SO TOLYA PEROV'S SONG OF LIFE HAS BEEN BROKEN OFF ABRUPTLY ON THE HIGHEST NOTE. HE LIVED BY THESE WORDS, UTTERED AT THE TRIAL OF THE POPULISTS BY ALEXANDER ULYANOV<sup>17</sup>, LENIN'S BROTHER: 'A DOZEN PEOPLE WILL ALWAYS BE FOUND IN RUSSIA WHO ARE SO DEEPLY DEVOTED TO THEIR IDEALS AND COUNTRY AND SO PAINED BY ITS SUFFERING THAT THEY WILL NOT REGARD IT A SACRIFICE TO GIVE THEIR LIFE FOR THEIR CAUSE. 'AL-

THOUGH VERY ILL, ANATOLI WAS AMONG THE FIRST TO TAKE UP HIS RIFLE. NEITHER THE PARTY ORGANISATION, NOR THE YOUNG COMMUNIST LEAGUE COULD PREVENT HIM FROM GOING TO THE FRONT. ANATOLI HATED WAR. HE WAS A GENTLE PERSON WHO LOVED CONSTRUCTION WORK. TOLYA COULD HAVE BECOME A PHILOLOGIST, A SCIENTIST, A POET. THE ENEMIES OF THE WORKING CLASS COMPELLED HIM TO BECOME A SOLDIER. THE YOUNG COMMUNIST LEAGUE HAS LOST ITS FOREMOST MEMBER FIGHTING FOR THE CAUSE OF THE REVOLUTION.

“LET US PLEDGE, COMRADES, IN THE NAME OF HIS NOBLE MEMORY, TO MAKE TOLYA’S DREAM A REALITY AND BUILD A NEW WORLD WITHOUT WARS, WITHOUT HATRED AMONG NATIONS, A WORLD OF BROTHERHOOD. WITH YOU GONE, WE FEEL UTTERLY BEREAVED. I SHALL NEVER FORGET YOU, TOLYA. FAREWELL.

ASYA.”

Young people with guitars on the stage are too moved to stand by without contributing something and they begin to sing their own.

#### *Requiem*

*Joy, sorrow, hardships in a row,  
A song of grief so passionately ringing.  
In bloody strife have filled unyielding,  
Blood-blinded eyes that see no more.  
Pain, victory and losses were in store...  
And flames of wire, like a constellation,  
This requiem — of death it speaks,  
Farewell, my brother!  
Death’s metal — is the requiem.  
My comrade, fare thee well!*<sup>18</sup>

#### “THE LAST TRIBUTE

“KIEV, SEPTEMBER 25, RECEIVED BY CABLE. RED ARMY SOLDIERS AND LOCAL YOUTH WHOM TOLYA PEROV HAD ORGANISED INTO A YOUTH LEAGUE, FILED PAST HIS COFFIN THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT. ASYA ISTOMINA, REPRESENTING THE MOSCOW YOUNG COMMUNIST LEAGUE, STOOD AT THE HEAD OF THE COFFIN DURING THE VIGIL. SHE ALSO SPOKE THE LAST WORDS OF FAREWELL. THE



HERO'S COFFIN WAS LOWERED INTO THE GRAVE TO THE STRAINS OF THE REQUIEM. A HUGE WREATH OF YELLOW AND RED MAPLE LEAVES WAS PLACED ON HIS GRAVE. RED BANNERS TRIMMED WITH BLACK WERE LOWERED TO A VOLLEY OF GUN SALUTES. FOLLOWING THE FUNERAL THERE WAS A MEETING AT WHICH MANY JOINED THE YCL TO TAKE TOLYA'S PLACE.

WITNESS."

A record of the enrollment of Konstantin Alexeyevich Simagin, 18 years of age, YCL member, into the Communist Party of Russia (Bolsheviks).

*Question.* Are you applying for registration or asking to join the Communist Party?

*Simagin.* I wish to join.

*Question.* What privileges or priorities do you expect by joining?

*Simagin.* Priority in facing danger.

*Question.* How do you see your life in the future?

*Simagin.* I have no idea.

*Question.* Why are you joining the Communist Party?

*Simagin.* I can't stand on the sidelines while my comrades are dying. I want to take their place. I have expressed what I think about it in my pledge. May I read it now?

After saying a pledge

*K. A. Simagin* was unanimously accepted into the ranks of the RCP(B)  
*Supplement* (by the author)

"THIS IS MY INVIOABLE PROMISE AND PLEDGE OF A COMMUNIST.

"ON BECOMING A MEMBER OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF BOLSHEVIKS, I VOLUNTARILY, CONSCIOUSLY AND WITHOUT THOUGHT OF SELF-GAIN PROMISE TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

TO REGARD ALL COMMUNIST COMRADES AND THOSE WHO SHARE OUR VIEWS AS MY OWN FAMILY, NOT ONLY IN WORD, BUT ALSO IN DEED; TO FIGHT TO THE LAST DROP OF MY BLOOD FOR THE INTERESTS OF THE POOR: BOTH WORKERS AND PEASANTS;

TO DO MY ALL FOR THE PROLETARIAT;

TO DEFEND SOVIET POWER, ITS HONOUR AND DIGNITY BY DEED AND PERSONAL EXAMPLE.

I DEEM IT MY DUTY:

NEVER TO COVER UP THE ENEMIES OF THE PEOPLE;

RECRUIT MORE FOLLOWERS OF COMMUNIST TEACHING;

BRING UP MY FAMILY AS GENUINE BOLSHIEVICS.

I PLEDGE:

TO FACE DEATH IN THE STRUGGLE FOR THE LIBERATION OF THE PROLETARIAT FROM THEIR OPPRESSORS CALMLY AND WITH DIGNITY; NEVER TO BEG THE ENEMIES OF THE WORKING PEOPLE FOR MERCY EITHER IN CAPTIVITY OR IN BATTLE; IN FACING THE ENEMY — NEVER TO PRETEND THAT I HOLD DIFFERENT VIEWS FOR THE SAKE OF PERSONAL GAIN OR PROFIT.

I REJECT:

THE PURSUIT AND ACCUMULATION OF PERSONAL WEALTH, MONEY OR PROPERTY;

I CONSIDER GAMBLING, DRUNKENNESS AND TRADING SHAMEFUL SINCE THEY LEAD TO THE PURSUIT OF PERSONAL GAIN;

I REGARD IT IMPERMISSIBLE TO DIVIDE PEOPLE BY RELIGION, LANGUAGE, NATIONALITY OR RACE BECAUSE I KNOW THAT IN THE FUTURE ALL WORKING PEOPLE WILL BE ONE FAMILY.

I WILL HAVE MERCY ONLY ON THOSE WHO BECAUSE OF THEIR IGNORANCE ARE DECEIVED OR MISLED BY THE ENEMY. I WILL ONLY FORGIVE AND FORGET THE CRIMES OF THOSE WHO SINCERELY REPENT, ABANDON THE ENEMY TO SUPPORT US AND WHO BY THEIR ACTIONS REDEEM THE PAST. IF I VIOLATE ANY OF THESE PLEDGES CONSCIOUSLY OR FOR THE SAKE OF PROFIT OR PERSONAL GAIN, I WILL BECOME A DESPICABLE TRAITOR AND OUTCAST. THIS WOULD MEAN I WAS UNTRUE TO MYSELF, TO MY COMRADES, UNTRUE TO MY OWN CONSCIENCE AND UTTERLY UNWORTHY OF THE NAME OF HUMAN BEING”.

## SCENE FIVE

Lenin's office. *Lenin* is behind his desk. *Sapozhnikova*, a young woman of about 24 years of age, enters the room.

*Sapozhnikova*. Vladimir Ilyich, it's all a misunderstanding! I took part in the October Revolution. I'm a Bolshevik! The masses know me!

*Lenin*. Now there, there... Please don't get so upset! Please... (*Pours out some water*). There, now, drink this.

*Sapozhnikova*. Thank you. (*Drinks the water*). *It's unfair... Oh, so unfair...*

*Lenin*. Now, do calm yourself ... please do. I shall listen to you with utmost attention and I'll do all I can to help you.

*Sapozhnikova*. Just a minute... Let me catch my breath... You know me, Comrade Lenin... I was on the presidium at Lefortovo when you spoke there. I sat right next to you and you talked to me.

*Lenin*. Please, make yourself comfortable... There! That's more like it. Now, then, I'm listening.

*Sapozhnikova*. I work at the Moscow City Soviet. I received a complaint from Grechikhin, a peasant who claimed that his horse was unjustly requisitioned. So I just wrote on the complaint slip: "We are up to our necks in work and have no time for such trifles."

*Lenin*. How could you do such a thing?

*Sapozhnikova*. Because it's true! We really do have too much to do — there's no time for such minor details! And just for that I was called a heartless bureaucrat and all this fuss was raised. Here, look at this... (*Gives him a paper*). And now they want to place me under disciplinary arrest!

*Lenin* (*looks at the paper*). Tell me now, how did you come to take such a decision?

*Sapozhnikova*. That's quite simple! We're surrounded by enemies; counter-revolutionary revolts and rebellions flare up first in one place, then another. There's the Poles and Wrangel again. We collect supplies for the Red Army like crumbs — grain, arms, clothing, horses. Maybe we did make a mistake with one horse. But maybe it was that very horse which brought us victory. Who knows? We were victorious, we saved the people from capitalism, we freed them from tsarism! Millions of people! For such victories no sacrifice is too great! Some peasants can just tighten their belts. And

anyway he managed to survive without the horse, didn't he?

*Lenin.* But what if he hadn't?

*Sapozhnikova.* From a historical point of view such a sacrifice would have been justified. After all he didn't die. He survived. Another historical moment is now at hand. We are preparing for world revolution. Fighting hunger, deciding the fates of millions, beginning to build communism. We work day and night, sometimes three days and three nights without sleep, we try not to forget the smallest thing. And then on top of it all comes this peasant and his horse...

*Lenin.* Tell me, what do you think the revolution has given the peasants?

*Sapozhnikova.* Land.

*Lenin.* Then, don't you think that land need to be cultivated? If you have land and a horse, you can plow, sow and harvest the crop. But what if there is no horse, not even a miserable nag? What then? Then either you yourself replace the horse at the plough and if you just can't, you have to beg for your bread... So, for you personally, and as you wrongly believe, for Soviet power, Grechikhin's horse may be just a trifle. But for him it is a matter of life or death!

*Sapozhnikova.* But that's looking at it from the peasant's point of view, not the state's!

*Lenin.* And now, as regards sacrifices. Unfortunately it is the price people have to pay for their freedom. But sacrifices due to stupidity, senselessness and ignorance can never be justified!

*Sapozhnikova.* But Vladimir Ilyich, what is one Grechikhin compared to the needs of millions?

*Lenin.* Abstract millions are made up of people like Grechikhin and their children, who want to eat, drink and live... Has this never occurred to you? And if your "state" point of view does not take the simple, common interests of its citizens into consideration, then who needs such a state?

*Sapozhnikova.* Then we won't see the forest for the trees, Vladimir Ilyich!

*Lenin.* Comrade Sapozhnikova, no one gave you the right to decide the fate of millions. Right? You have been only asked to deal with concrete human needs and to help provide for people. Right? Nobody asked you to turn them into enemies of Soviet power.

*Sapozhnikova.* Oh, Vladimir Ilyich, how could you say such a thing?

*Lenin.* Well, let's try to understand Grechikhin and how he feels. Because of his illiteracy he can't as yet distinguish you from the Soviet government. For him you are the Soviet government. So if you are unjust to him, if you insult him, if you doom him to starvation and death, tell me — why he should need such a government? Why should he support it? He is bound to become your enemy!

*Sapozhnikova.* But these peasants ... no matter what you do for them, they will always be hostile.

*Lenin.* Forgive me, but you are repeating somebody else's nonsense. And a pernicious piece of nonsense at that. If the Soviet government is capable of creating better conditions for the peasants — and that is what this revolution is all about — they will hardly be hostile. But if you don't create those conditions — we'll lose the workers as well as the peasants. (*He paces back and forth.*) Tell me, Comrade Sapozhnikova, did you dismiss Grechikhin's complaint as "trifling" because he is a peasant? And because, as you put it, all peasants are hostile?

*Sapozhnikova.* How can you think that of me?! I know all about our policy of alliance with the peasantry. I would have acted the same way if he were a worker.

*Lenin.* What is your Christian name?

*Sapozhnikova.* Shura, Alexandra Tikhonovna.

*Lenin.* Look here, Shura, Alexandra Tikhonovna, don't you think you're just a bureaucrat? A young, thriving bureaucrat?

*Sapozhnikova (she laughs).* Oh, no, Vladimir Ilyich, not at all! I'm no bureaucrat! I'm a party member!

*Lenin.* And what is bureaucracy in your opinion?

*Sapozhnikova (laughing).* What is bureaucracy? Really it's laughable that you should even ask me such things.

*Lenin.* Why?

*Sapozhnikova.* Why? Because I, myself, lecture to the masses on that subject.

*Lenin.* That's interesting. And what do you tell them?

*Sapozhnikova.* Well, I first go to the local party branch where I'm going to speak and ask the organiser to give me two or three locally known cases of flagrant bureaucracy so I can base my lecture on them to bring out the main idea.

*Lenin.* What idea?

*Sapozhnikova.* Well, I always begin with some positive examples and then I say: "The old bureaucracy is now destroyed but we still have some bureaucrats around. In their



work in Soviet offices they have brought with them the old baggage of inefficiency and red tape, poor management and weak discipline. Soviet power has declared that only the participation of the broadest masses in the government apparatus ... in the government apparatus..." How does it go?...

*Lenin.* You are quite correct. It was written a year ago. I believe you quote to the letter.

*Sapozhnikova.* I always make a point of learning your works by heart.

*Lenin.* I must say you have a very good memory.

*Sapozhnikova.* Well, I'm young. And when I come to this part: "Under communism there will be no room for bureaucracy", I always get a big hand.

*Lenin.* And just what do you have in mind when you speak of communism?

*Sapozhnikova (smiling).* Oh, I heard your speech on the subject, Vladimir Ilyich. Communism is electrification based on Soviet power.

*Lenin.* I see, Soviet power and electrification. Good. And what is Soviet power in your opinion?

*Sapozhnikova.* What do you mean "what"? It's our power! Before it was the tsars, the landowners, the capitalists. And now it's us!

*Lenin.* "Us"? Just who is this "us"?

*Sapozhnikova.* Well, the Bolsheviks, who were appointed... You come first, then Kalinin, then all the rest of the leaders. And in the lower echelon it's us — the state apparatus.

*Lenin.* Recently I examined one comrade's knowledge of grammar. I asked him which is the adjective and which the noun in the words "Soviet power"? He replied that "power" was the noun and "Soviet" — the adjective.

*Sapozhnikova.* Well, isn't that right?

*Lenin.* It is from the point of view of grammar and his understanding of the matter. But for us it's the other way round. "Soviet" is the noun and "power" is the adjective. Don't you grasp the difference?

*Sapozhnikova.* I'll have to think it over.

*Lenin.* What Soviet power is, is made clear in the words you learned by heart, but, forgive me, you did not understand. Soviet power means the broadest participation of the people in the government of the country. Not formal participation when the people only vote but the decisions affecting their lives are made by bureaucratic officials far removed from their interests, as, for example, in your case. No. Soviet

power is genuine participation in government, involving everybody. Soviet government is not government for the people — it is government by the people. We shall therefore never surrender our slogan that every housewife...

*Sapozhnikova.* ...must govern the country!

*Lenin.* I never said that. Must learn to! I stress — must learn the art of governing the country! Because otherwise the housewife will run the state like a kitchen. At present, unfortunately, she does not have too much knowledge beyond her pots and pans. Do you understand, Shura?

*Sapozhnikova.* I'll think it over.

*Lenin.* And what do you think electrification means?

*Sapozhnikova (laughs).* You are really treating me like a child, Vladimir Ilyich... It's as clear as day! Electricity, power stations, light, electric bulbs, industrial plants, factories, industries — that's putting it in a nutshell.

*Lenin.* But what is behind all that? The highest level of cultural development. Culture based on total literacy, total education. What stands in our way? What threatens to doom all our efforts to failure? Bureaucracy! The bureaucrat will always obstruct any broad involvement of the people in government because he is reluctant to give up his exclusive position. The bureaucrat will always, even unconsciously, fight against genuine culture. Culture alone will be the decisive factor in the complete elimination of bureaucracy. Don't you see?

*Sapozhnikova.* I'll have to think it over.

*Lenin.* And when you do, during your disciplinary detention, I'm sure you'll realise and regret what a sorry part you played in this whole affair.

*Sapozhnikova.* Vladimir Ilyich, how can you say that? How can I, a proletarian woman, a party member, harm my own government? How can I be a bureaucrat?

*Lenin.* Unfortunately, it happens all too often that people of working-class origin act like petty-bourgeois Philistines and bureaucrats. Working-class origin is all very well, but it is not enough... What kind of an education did you get?

*Sapozhnikova.* Three grades of grammar school. I also attend a political studies group.

*Lenin.* And what do you study there?

*Sapozhnikova.* "The ABC of Communism", pamphlets, newspapers...

*Lenin.* How do you go about it?

*Sapozhnikova.* First I copy out passages and slogans into my notebook, then I learn them by heart.

*Lenin.* Don't you ever feel how badly you lack the most elementary knowledge?

*Sapozhnikova.* Well, why else am I attending the political studies group?

*Lenin.* And besides the political scene, what are you studying?

*Sapozhnikova.* Oh, please, Vladimir Ilyich, I have enough trouble trying to follow political studies!

*Lenin.* All the same, don't you think a bit of basic knowledge would help?

*Sapozhnikova.* That'll have to wait. The main thing as far as I'm concerned is to keep up with the present political situation.

*Lenin.* And how do you go about it?

*Sapozhnikova.* Well ... you have to know which way the wind is blowing... What the counter-revolution is up to... What's going to happen with the Poles... And then there's the peasant question. What are the latest guidelines? What we should tell the masses?

*Lenin (speaking as if to a child).* No, my dear Shura, Alexandra Tikhonovna. You will never learn what communism is all about if you go about it that way. If communist studies merely consist of reading books and pamphlets about communism we are bound to produce only self-assured communist demagogues and braggarts. It will be even more dangerous if the young generation only learn communist slogans ... and what is more ... by heart... How many members are there in the Young Communist League? Half a million? That's for today. But tomorrow there'll be a million. A million young men and women who will start calling themselves communists after studies of this kind. I believe this is one of the greatest dangers, one that can inflict a lot of harm on the cause of communism. Just imagine how easy it would be in such a sad situation for all kinds of demagogues and charlatans to mislead young people and mould them in their own image like wax!

*Sapozhnikova.* I'll think about it.

*Lenin.* We could commit a grave error, dear Alexandra Tikhonovna, if we thought it possible to become a communist without assimilating mankind's heritage. Yes, yes, you have to learn, Shura, get a good grasp of basic knowledge. And every single day you have to do something for the

common good ... it doesn't have to be anything big — just something within your grasp, but for the good of people... Meanwhile ... since objectively you are a hindrance to Soviet power and a handicap for the present to the Soviet government, I think it best we separate you from it.

*Sapozhnikova.* A handicap for the present? But how about the future?

*Lenin.* That will greatly depend upon you.

*Sapozhnikova.* Oh, what am I going to do! I feel so terribly confused!

*Lenin.* Think about it, Shura. Try to understand. And start learning. (*After a pause*). Don't be upset that you have to give up your present job. It's for your own good. Such work demands great dedication to the people. You doomed a human being to death and weren't even aware of it.

*Sapozhnikova.* Forgive me, Comrade Lenin.

*Lenin* (*takes a book from the shelf and inscribes it quickly*). This is for you as a memento. There's a lot of good reading in it. I hope you like it.

*Sapozhnikova.* Thank you.

*Lenin.* Goodbye...

*Sapozhnikova* leaves. *Lenin* is alone. He sits lost in thought and very upset. *Natasha* enters.

Heine once said about some of his imitators and so-called "successors": "I've sown dragons but reaped fleas." You know what the worst of it is? That distortions of Marxism will be taken for Marxism by some. (*Suddenly*.) The scoundrels!

*Natasha.* Who, Vladimir Ilyich?

*Lenin.* Those who robbed her of an education. No, no, so far it's not her own fault, it's her misfortune ... so far... (*He picks up the receiver*.) Give me Lunacharsky. Anatoli Vasilyevich, how about using all of Krasin's money, I mean the entire one hundred thousand pounds, to buy a pencil factory abroad? We are such an illiterate nation! We need to get behind a school desk! We need millions of pencils! Of course the economists will have my scalp, but if you support me, I am ready to fight it out. Alright then, it's settled. Tomorrow we take it up at the Council of People's Commissars. (*He puts down the receiver*.) *Natasha*, get me the comrades from the Central Committee of the Young Commu-

nist League right away. Tell them to come over immediately. It's urgent.

*Natasha.* But Vladimir Ilyich, you're supposed to go for a walk. Doctor Obukh has been waiting outside for over an hour. He says you're burning the candle at both ends and it's wrong. And I fully agree with him. You yourself said only this morning that seeing the YCLers was not urgent.

*Lenin.* Well, I was wrong. There's nothing more urgent to-day! Nothing more important!

*Natasha.* Then you will speak at their congress?

*Lenin.* I most certainly will! True, I already made the speech today... Well, perhaps it's all for the best... (*He is suddenly silent.*)

*Natasha.* What's on your mind, Vladimir Ilyich?

*Lenin.* Marx expressed it very aptly: ignorance is a diabolical force and it may be the cause of many tragedies yet to come... (*Walks up to his desk.*) Yes, Natasha, I asked you this morning...

*Natasha.* I found out for you, Vladimir Ilyich. I simply didn't wish to upset you.

*Lenin.* He died?

*Natasha.* Yes. A week ago.

*Lenin.* And the painting?

*Natasha.* Blue Horses on Red Grass?

*Lenin.* Yes.

*Natasha.* He had no time to finish it.

*Lenin (after a long silence).* Get in touch with the Kom-somol members. I am waiting for them. (*He walks to the centre of the stage and now addresses the audience as the Actor*). The Third Congress of the Young Communist League took place in the building where the Lenin Kom-somol Theatre in Moscow is housed today... A red banner huge as the sky, was hung above the presidium table. And everywhere there were posters with slogans.

Before our eyes the stage is transformed into the presidium of the Third Congress of the Young Communist League of Russia.

The most enterprising delegates sat so tightly packed on the stage one wondered how the speaker would find enough space to address the audience. From time to time a member of the presidium would appeal to those sitting on the stage "to clear the platform". But nobody really listened. Everyone pretended it was meant for someone else. On the right all



the front rows were occupied by the Petrograd delegation. On the left — by delegates from Moscow, the Ukraine, Tula, the Urals. (*There is cheering from the delegations mentioned.*) When Vladimir Ilyich said he would speak about the goals of the Young Communist League, the delegates were surprised and puzzled: they felt no need to be told what they already knew. They had defeated Krasnov, Denikin, Kolchak and the White Poles. They waited to hear who they were to fight now. But Lenin suddenly began to speak of the need to study, to learn about communism, morality, ethics and culture. It is no secret that at the time not all the delegates understood him. It was only later, especially in that terrible month of January 1924, when he died, that many of them were able to grasp the essence of his words. For essentially this was his testament to the young generation. Yes, testament is just the right word. For he was telling them that his own generation had accomplished its extraordinary historical task and would soon leave the scene, but the most difficult work was yet to be done and that it would have to be done by the generations to come... Yes, by you and me... The most difficult job of all! But this was to come later... Meanwhile, here, on October 2, 1920, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin appeared amongst us, unnoticed by anyone. He moved along the stage apologising, trying not to tread on anyone's feet. He slipped off his coat as he made his way to the presidium table...

The actor now becomes Lenin. He makes his way to the presidium table, apologising and trying not to tread on anyone's feet, slipping off his coat on the way. He is recognised at this point. There are excited cries and cheers. He stands quietly, a modest, simple man, and smiles.

*Lenin.* Greetings to all of you! Today I would like to speak to you about the goals of the Young Communist League...

CURTAIN

1977

# Thus Shall We Conquer!



A PUBLICISTIC  
TRAGEDY



## PART ONE

The eighteenth of October 1923. Lenin's study in the Kremlin. There is no one here. Silence. The light of the dying day is barely visible through the drawn curtains. The table, books and armchairs are still under dust covers. It is obvious that no one has worked here for some time. An atmosphere of anxiety reigns over all. Suddenly there is the sound of a woman's footsteps approaching — someone is hurrying to the study, and clearly has some distance to cover; a tense moment of waiting passes, and finally *Volodicheva*, Lenin's secretary, literally bursts into the room. She looks around helplessly, not knowing where to begin, runs to the windows — and light pours into the study. Once again there is the sound of a woman approaching. *Volodicheva* feverishly begins to tidy the study. The door opens and *Glyasser*, another of Lenin's secretaries, enters.

*Glyasser*. What's happened?

*Volodicheva*. Hurry up! Fotiyeva telephoned ... straight away ... the study ... tidy up.

*Glyasser*. He's coming back?

*Volodicheva*. I don't know ... it would seem so ... she said ... straight away! ... The study!... Perfectly in order...

*Glyasser*. Is he better?

*Volodicheva*. These newspapers must be cleared away!

*Glyasser*. Clear them away, then. When is he coming?

*Volodicheva*. I don't know. I understood that it might be any minute.

*Glyasser*. It's rather stuffy in here, isn't it? Perhaps we should open the windows?

*Volodicheva*. They mustn't be left open long.

*Glyasser*. Have you been to Gorki?

*Volodicheva*. I came back two days ago.

*Glyasser*. And you haven't said anything?

*Volodicheva*. He seemed quite cheerful. He was singing

"The Scarlet Standard". Ferster said that his health was improving, but very slowly. There was one little cloud on the horizon, but then everything cleared up again.

*Glyasser.* What little cloud?

*Volodicheva.* Ferster noticed that he was a little paler than usual, but then it passed. Everyone was terribly worried.

*Glyasser.* And was he?

*Volodicheva.* He didn't appear to notice anything.

*Glyasser.* Didn't notice, or only appeared not to?

*Volodicheva.* No. It was over in a moment. As you can see, we're getting the study ready.

*Glyasser.* It might be a good idea to leave today's newspaper...

*Volodicheva* (*taking a newspaper out of her briefcase*). Here...

*Glyasser.* And how does he look? Masha, you must tell me! I haven't seen him for so long!

*Volodicheva.* You'll see him soon. He's cheerful, suntanned, his eyes are bright and laughing. Any moment I expect him to say: "My Mashenka, antimethuselah."

*Glyasser.* And who goes to see him there?

*Volodicheva.* The whole Kremlin is trying to, but the doctors won't let them. You can't get any work done all day when you come back from Gorki: you go into one office to tell them how Ilyich is, and you're immediately dragged off into another... And it's just the same at Gorki: he won't let you go until he's heard about everyone — how things are, how they're all looking, how they're all feeling. That would seem to be everything... Shall I turn the lights on?

*Glyasser.* Yes, I think so. We ought to change the calendar; it's still showing the twelfth of December.

*Volodicheva.* Of course. No one's been in here since he fell ill... That's almost a year. Turn it to the eighteenth of October.

*Fotiyeva* (*appearing in the doorway*). Have you got everything ready?

*Volodicheva.* Lydia Aleksandrovna! Is he better? Has he spoken?

*Fotiyeva.* If only...

*Volodicheva.* Well?

*Fotiyeva.* I don't really know myself... This morning he gave us to understand that he had to come to Moscow. They said of course that the doctors are opposed to it. He went to the gates leading out of the park and sat down on a



bench. He was called to dinner, but refused. Then they told him there was no vehicle available. Then he went to the garage, got into the car, and continued to sit there in silence despite all arguments and appeals. Then they telephoned Moscow. Moscow wanted to refuse, but Ferster said that they should give way as it was bad for him to be upset. They left an hour ago, and it may be that he'll call in here... That's why I threw you all into such a flurry of activity.

*Volodicheva (suddenly).* I know why he's coming... *(She has burst into tears.)*

*Fotiyeva.* Masha, what's the matter? Stop it this instant.

*Volodicheva.* Has there been a deterioration?

*Fotiyeva.* There was, but now everything is fine, as you saw for yourself.

*Volodicheva (nodding towards the table).* He's coming for his papers...

*Glyasser.* What papers? Do stop wailing, it's impossible to understand anything...

*Volodicheva.* Don't you remember? He dictated a letter to me for the congress ... personal character references... He asked me to put them in an envelope, seal, and write on the envelope: "To be opened only by Lenin and, after his death, by Nadezhda Konstantinovna." I didn't want to, I said I wouldn't write "after his death". The congress was to be held four months later, I said, and he had no right to be thinking about death. He replied that one had to be ready for everything, that anything was possible... No, I said, it isn't possible, you're a perfectly young man. So you've fallen ill. What about it? You'll get better again a thousand times over... He laughed and said: "Once is enough for me." He told me not to be stubborn, but I still refused... Very well, he said, put it in the top drawer of my desk and guard it as a document of particular importance and absolutely secret. When the time comes, when I feel that the time has come, I'll give it to Nadezhda Konstantinovna myself... And now — there was a little cloud just a short while ago, and we thought he hadn't noticed, but he ... he's coming for the papers...

*Fotiyeva (speaking decisively).* Nonsense! Masha, that is nonsense! He won't even remember it, you'll see... He's simply weary of Gorki. He misses Moscow... He asked for permission to leave with Nadezhda Konstantinovna last week, but the doctors wouldn't allow it, fearing he'd stay... Nonsense! You'll see, he won't even come to this table!

The sound of an approaching car can be heard through the open window. The women rush to look outside.

*Fotiyeva. He's coming here! (Switches on a table lamp.)*  
It's as if he'd never been away.

*Fotiyeva, Volodicheva and Glyasser leave the study. There is a long, tense moment of anxious waiting. Footsteps... They are coming closer and closer... The clock strikes: quarter to six in the evening. Vladimir Ilyich Lenin appears and glances round the study — he has not been here for almost a year. He goes up to the armchair and touches it affectionately, places his hand on the revolving bookstand and rotates it a couple of times, runs his hand along the table, notices that the calendar is showing today's date, that a copy of *Pravda* has been prepared for him, that his pencils have been sharpened... He stands for a few minutes by the table. The look in Lenin's eyes is one of concentrated introspection. There is no sound at all. Then, suddenly, there is a powerful chord of music which resounds like a landslide or an earthquake... Only music is capable of conveying the storm of feeling, of passion, which this man is experiencing at this moment...*

*Lenin's inward gaze pushes apart the walls of the study till they disappear to reveal a multitude of faces: friends, enemies, the indifferent, the curious, the sympathetic — all those who have been here, with whom he has argued and fought, with whom he has marched side by side, and also those whom he has never seen, but to whom he has given his life... Over them all is a panorama of Russia, a panorama of the world... The chain reaction of recollections, with its rapid transitions from one period to another, its shifts and interweavings, is subject to the laws of artistic logic and makes no claim to include all and everything. It merely focusses our attention on just a few stages in this rich life, adds a few strokes to the "unfinished portrait" of the leader, thinker and fighter. Perhaps it will succeed in helping us to feel the pain of loss, to experience to some small degree at least what was felt by others during the cold January days of 1924... Let us not try to protect ourselves from that pain — it forms and ennobles the spirit.*

*In creating, through the medium of the theatre, the wonderful and fierce world of revolutionary Russia, the image of her people, from whom Lenin draws the energy of his thought and to whom he returns it, we must not for a moment forget that this is the most important element in our play. When the action is set in Lenin's study, life outside that study does not cease but merely recedes in order to erupt again when necessary into the calm and concentration and sweep a storm-tossed sea of revolution across the stage... If, inside the study walls, our main weapon is the word, the world surrounding that study is dominated by theatrical poetry, movement, artistic representation. An image of black and white at the centre, surrounded by colour. The task set here leaves the director ample opportunity to select the expressive means. We shall only suggest the location and indicate the outline, the melody to be developed. The solution of this task will give voice to one of the main themes running through this play — Lenin and the party, Lenin and*

the people. Revolutionary Russia, raging, storm-tossed, surging towards tomorrow and receding into the past, has swirled around Lenin's study, and he stands at his table like a captain at the helm, gazing into the faces, listening to the "straining tackle". The chords of the "Internationale" — the leitmotiv of his life — can be heard, at first in thundering cascade, then gradually fading away... Vladimir Ilyich goes up to the cast-iron figure of a blacksmith with his hammer, a gift from workers. We can see this same statue in the hands of a *worker* standing in the middle of the crowd.

*Worker.* Dear Ilyich, on this your fiftieth birthday, please accept warm greetings and this modest present which we ourselves have made — a blacksmith with a hammer. Standing at the head of the working class, you did not expect to receive glory, did not expect fine palaces. You yourself did not want these things, and the poor could not give them to you. But we, the workers, have given you and will give you in place of that glory our burning hearts and souls...

*Voices (ringing out cheerfully).* The final hour! Decisive victories at the battle-fronts of the Civil War!

— Kolchak, Denikin and Yudenich have been defeated! The blockade has been broken by the victories of the Red Army!

— The onslaughts of famine and dislocation will be repelled by an army of labour!

— Long live the spring of nineteen twenty — the source of all new beginnings!

— Long live communism, advancing across the whole world, and dear Ilyich, its leader!

A ray of light illuminates a *group of comrades-in-arms*.

*A Comrade.* On the occasion of your fiftieth birthday, the Council of People's Commissars have adopted a resolution to present to you a canvas by an unknown artist entitled "And in the Kremlin the sharp gaze of the wily one looks out through clever, narrowed eyes...", together with a collection of caricatures of the members of the Council of People's Commissars, beginning with the chairman — the work of Council members. I shall read out the guide to this gallery. (*He reads.*)

*My friends, and friends of Capital!  
It's time to introduce you all —  
Without a previous vote, I fear,  
Or ceremony — to our hero.*

*Our Chairman, Vladimir Lenin,  
Worked on the Neva's distant shores,  
Where you, perhaps, spent many hours  
Or sat in council (one of many),  
And where three years ago, they say,  
The Winter Palace fell one day.  
Vladimir was much boredom spared:  
A very learned Council shared  
The burden of deciding how  
To build a new life here and now.*

Vladimir Ilyich, I shall not deprive you of the pleasure of personally acquainting yourself with each member of our family of People's Commissars, and here a place is given to each, but shall simply say:

*This crowd is an unruly lot.  
It naturally takes a lot  
Of work and will and wisdom, too,  
To make them work as one big crew.  
So let us praise the birthday child!  
He's proved that one can make a wild  
And trembling deer and steady steed  
Work together as a team, and heed,  
So they'll pull this cart of ours —  
The Council of People's Commissars.*

*Lenin (stepping to the front of the stage, towards the audience).* First of all I must express my thanks for two things: firstly, for those greetings which have been sent to me today, and secondly, even greater thanks for having not obliged me to listen to all those greetings. I would then like to say a few words concerning our Bolshevik party. I have been prompted to do so by Kautsky,<sup>1</sup> who wrote about Russia: "In the year one thousand eight hundred and forty-eight, the Slavs were that icy frost which killed the flowers of a people's spring. Perhaps they are now fated to be that storm which will break the ice of reaction and be the irresistible herald of a new and happy spring for the nations..." Those are the words written eighteen years ago about the revolutionary movement in Russia by a prominent socialist with whom we have now had to break so decisively. These words lead me to wonder whether our party might not now, perhaps, find itself in a very dangerous situation — in

the situation of a man who has started to give himself airs. A rather stupid, shameful and ridiculous situation. It is a well-known fact that the failures and decline of political parties have often been preceded by such a situation, a situation in which these parties had the opportunity to give themselves airs. Indeed, those hopes of the Russian revolution which I have quoted in the words of our most hostile enemy are excessive hopes. The brilliant victories which we have won to date were victories in conditions which faced us with military tasks, while the tasks which constitute the essence of a socialist revolution in both the economic and the political sense were placed beyond us and we did not have the chance to deal with them as they require. Therefore the danger indicated by the words I have quoted should be seriously considered by both all Bolsheviks separately and the Bolshevik party as a whole. We must realise that the decisions taken by our party congress constitute an entire programme which must be put into practice whatever the cost, and this means that we have enormous work to do which will demand much more effort than has been required up to now. Allow me to conclude by expressing the hope that we will never allow our party to become a party which gives itself airs.

The notes of the "Revolutionary Etude" are heard, and we can already see Lenin on a troubled December evening of 1922; *Volodicheva* is sitting in front of him, notebook in hand.

I am going to dictate a letter to the party congress. Everything is, of course, Maria Akimovna, absolutely secret. Absolutely. For everyone. Take a note. (*He dictates.*) "I would like to share with you certain considerations which I believe to be the most important... At the head of the list I include enlarging the membership of the Central Committee to several dozen, even several hundred... This is necessary both to raise the authority of the Central Committee ... and also in order to prevent conflicts among a small number within the Central Committee having too great an effect on the future of the party." (*He paces up and down the room.*) It's a long time since I saw you last...

*Volodicheva (in justification).* The doctors wouldn't allow it before. Vladimir Ilyich, ever since you fell ill on the twelfth of December I've asked to see you every day.

*Lenin.* I know. An hour ago I told the medics that I'm very worried over one particular matter, and that I should be



unable to sleep unless I could have five minutes to dictate a note on it... And now here you are. But why are you so pale?

*Volodicheva.* I'm not pale at all, simply there isn't much light in here. Now you...

*Lenin.* What about me? What to do: find a way out or speak the truth?

*Volodicheva (in a sudden burst).* You look just fine!

*Lenin.* My ears stick out.

*Volodicheva.* No, really: your eyes are sparkling... I'm very glad you're in such a good mood.

*Lenin.* What's the date today?

*Volodicheva.* The twenty-third of December.

*Lenin.* The twenty-third of December, nineteen twenty-two... How many days have I been laid up? How many things have happened, and I was in bed. (*In business-like fashion.*) Has a lot happened?

*Volodicheva.* There has been a plenum of the Central Committee... It was decided that everyone should obey the instructions of your doctors ... that no one should discuss work with you ... that in the papers ... that you should not be worried by politics ... so as not to fuel the fire of your illness...

*Lenin.* And who is the unrecognised talent behind such eloquence?

*Volodicheva.* But surely you must agree that he was right?

*Lenin.* What else happened at the plenum?

*Volodicheva.* Stalin was given personal responsibility for ensuring adherence to these instructions. He refused, but the plenum insisted. (*She speaks resolutely.*) And I think that was right! And I will carry them out, however angry you might be about it.

*Lenin.* And I shall follow these instructions to the letter! More than that, we shall demand the same from everyone. We shall be in the forefront! What do you say, Maria Akimovna?

*Volodicheva.* I think...

*Lenin.* And so do I. Moreover I've just remembered that some great man once pronounced these genial words: "Rules exist so that there might be exceptions." Do you feel the profundity?

*Volodicheva.* Well, generally speaking...

*Lenin.* And in the particular also, believe me. All that is genial and profound should be followed unswervingly, which is what you and I shall do.

*Volodicheva.* The exceptions?

*Lenin.* Quite so. By the way, ask them to send me Engels's book *Political Testament*. I asked that it be kept specially... I've been reading the old men's work this morning... (*He falls silent for a while, sunk in thought.*) History would indeed be mystical if the fortuitous played no role in it at all... The character of those who stand at the head of a movement is among those fortuitous factors... What an amazingly profound and precise character portrayal they give of Lassalle! "This man came to his downfall because he linked everything to his own person, and was continually engaged in admiring himself. 'How do I look?' was his constant refrain..." And compare this with the words of Lassalle himself, who said that if he had been born a prince or a duke, he would have been an aristocrat body and soul, and would most certainly have reached out his hand for the royal crown, but as he was merely the son of an ordinary burgher, he had no choice but to be a democrat. Well? What do you think? Take a note, please... (*He dictates.*) "By the stability of the Central Committee, of which I spoke earlier I mean measures to prevent a split...(A short pause.) By stability I mean a guarantee against a split in the near future, and I am prepared to elaborate here a number of considerations of a purely personal nature..."

*Volodicheva (looking at the sand-glass).* I was told, quite categorically, only ten minutes.

*Lenin (turning over the sand-glass).* Stuff and nonsense! Ten minutes, twenty minutes, what's the difference? I want to warn you once again that everything I have already dictated and am about to dictate is absolutely secret. Absolutely. It must be kept in a special place, guarded with special responsibility and considered as absolutely secret.

*Volodicheva.* I understand.

*Lenin (silently gathering his thoughts together, walking up and down still formulating them to himself).* Stalin ... who has become general secretary ... has concentrated immeasurable power in his hands ... but will he always prove capable of using this power with sufficient caution? I am not sure... Trotsky ... his talents ... his excessive self-assurance ... excessive interest in the purely administrative aspect of affairs... Might not these qualities in both men lead to a split inadvertently? Measures must be taken to prevent it. Their relations contain the danger of a split... Zinoviev... Kamenev... The October episode was, of course, no accident on their

part, no more than the non-Bolshevism of Trotsky... Non-Bolshevism—yes, yes, Menshevism, which makes itself felt at every sharp turn in history. Bukharin ... not only the most valuable and prominent theoretician in the party... he is deservedly seen as the party's favourite ... but his theoretical views can only be considered wholly Marxist with considerable reservation ... he never studied and never fully understood dialectics... Pyatakov ... his abilities ... his enthusiasm for administration ... and the administrative side of things... Probably not to be relied on in a serious political matter...

*Volodicheva (reminding Lenin of her presence).* Vladimir Ilyich...

*Lenin.* Mashenka, stop worrying. We are doing everything correctly.

*Volodicheva.* I gave my word not to infringe the doctors' instructions. Perhaps that's enough for the moment?

*Lenin.* What do you mean — that's enough! That's just the start, the most important is still to come... (*Paces up and down collecting his thoughts, leafs through a book.*) Well, I didn't know that! Amazing! In eighteen hundred and ninety-four, the Italian socialists asked Engels to provide an epigraph for their weekly journal *L'Era Nuova* which would sum up the main idea of the approaching age of socialism in contrast to the old age, which they had resumed in the words of Dante: "Some rule and others suffer."

*Volodicheva.* And what did Engels reply?

*Lenin.* That's just it! On the eve of his death, the old man chose, from everything they had written, a phrase from the *Manifesto*: "In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all." Just think — at the end of his life he repeats what they had said at the beginning! Isn't that wonderful!

*Fotiyeva and a doctor appear.*

*Doctor.* Good evening, Vladimir Ilyich.

*Lenin.* Good evening. Professor Ferster told me the day before yesterday that he was thinking of allowing me meetings before newspapers. However, it seems to me that, from a medical point of view, it should be the other way round — first the newspapers, and then the meetings. You read a news-

paper — and that's that, but a meeting requires exchange. What's your opinion, doctor?

*Fotiyeva.* But the amount of information you obtain from newspapers is more than you would get even from ten meetings.

*Lenin (reproachfully).* Lydia Aleksandrovna...

*Doctor.* And how are you feeling? I've been told that yesterday you complained of a headache.

*Lenin.* Me? Who has been slandering me? Into the dock! Ask Volodicheva. Lydia Aleksandrovna...

No one speaks.

*Doctor.* Vladimir Ilyich, I have been asked to tell you... it's regrettable that you began to suffer from headaches again yesterday ... that means something is upsetting you... *(He shifts uncomfortably.)*

*Lenin.* Speak up, doctor.

*Doctor.* A decision has been taken — the decision that Vladimir Ilyich is forbidden to do any kind of work ... dictation ... meetings and political information, which nonetheless reaches you... It is this, forgive me, which is undermining your health.

*Lenin.* And do you think this doesn't? Not very convincing, comrades...

*Doctor (speaking in a frank manner).* Vladimir Ilyich, what else can I do?

*Lenin.* I understand.

*Doctor.* It's a vicious circle. I would find it a thousand times pleasanter to permit you to do everything — to write, to read and to work.

*Lenin.* Forgive me, doctor... My nerves, my nerves. It's not a question of arguments but of mood. *(He changes the subject.)* Have you been to see any of the Art Theatre plays?

*Doctor.* I'm going tomorrow.

*Lenin.* You must let me know what you think. Last time they presented us with such a cock-and-bull story that we took fright and left. Nonetheless I'm an ardent supporter.

*Doctor.* I will most certainly let you know. And what is troubling you at the moment?

*Lenin (smiling).* "He knew only the thrall of thought" <sup>2</sup>... *(He laughs.)* Unfortunately there's no way to make that rhyme with "the fate of socialism in Russia"...

*Doctor.* I meant ... your headaches, for example...

*Lenin.* That's my only headache at the moment...

*Doctor.* Forgive me, but we must not talk about that.

*Lenin (smiling).* On the contrary, we should talk only of that.

*Doctor.* Vladimir Ilyich, you are not the chairman of the People's Commissariat at the moment but a patient, a sick man.

*Lenin.* No doctor, stuff and nonsense! Let's talk man to man.

*Fotiyeva and Volodicheva leave.*

*Doctor.* Vladimir Ilyich, what's the matter? Even your lips are trembling.

*Lenin.* Just one thing interests me — who is giving the instructions to whom: the doctors to the Central Committee, or the Central Committee to the doctors?

*Doctor.* We have received just one instruction from the Central Committee — to get you back on your feet. And we shall do everything we can, even at the cost of your displeasure, even at the risk of incurring your anger.

*Lenin (after a short pause).* Forgive me, doctor... (*He paces the study.*) Listen, try to understand... For me, work is life and silence is death. Your colleagues are making a mistake when they condemn me to inactivity. They quite simply don't know me. But you, doctor... You ought to understand... I am aware of my personal responsibility for all that will happen in Russia tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, in five, ten, fifty, a hundred years from now... I must ... it is my duty to dictate to my secretary... No one else can do this work for me ... this wretched illness ... I'm very well aware how dangerous it is... We are all mortal ... anything may happen at any moment ... and it will happen, at the most unsuitable... it's always the most unsuitable... Therefore I have to hurry... Yes, definitely, without the slightest shadow of a doubt! And you and your colleagues are absolutely correct: total rest, no thought of politics, the countryside, sunshine, fresh air, laughter and thanks to fate for each extra day... You are absolutely correct! Only not for me. I don't need that extra day if I don't say everything I have to... I don't need that extra day if I have to buy it at the cost of silence!

*Doctor.* Listen to me, Comrade Ulyanov! I have been a



doctor now for many years and, forgive me, know better than you do what is happening to you and what every word you dictate will cost you ... the effort, the suffering...

*Lenin.* Let that be my business, doctor...

There is a long pause.

*Doctor.* Is there a lot?

*Lenin.* A mere trifle! Just one word on the nationalities' question ... and one on the plan for building socialism ... and the dictatorship of the proletariat, cooperatives, the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate ... the state apparatus, culture, industrialisation ...

*Doctor.* Also just one word?

*Lenin.* Why should it take more? And then, of course, there's the question of education ... a word and a half to reply to Sukhanov ... and then various bits and pieces ... a heap of things... A tiny, tiny heap, I assure you!

*Doctor (having mastered his feelings).* You are asking a doctor to watch a patient kill himself.

*Lenin.* Both your business and mine demand that of us. Of me it demands that I forget about pain. Of you it demands that you forget that you know about it. Well, who or what are you afraid of? I will behave myself so well, feel so well, that no one will ever reproach you.

*Doctor.* No, Vladimir Ilyich, your obedient servant...

*Lenin.* And I had hoped you would understand me.

*Doctor.* Try to understand me, Vladimir Ilyich.

*Lenin.* What is there to understand?... It's unpleasant for both of us at the moment, and I don't know for which of us it's worse... I'll get my way all the same, by hook or by crook, and I'll work. No one can stop me.

*Doctor.* Above all, you mustn't become agitated, Vladimir Ilyich...

*Lenin (suddenly giving a broad smile).* I'm absolutely calm. More, I'm in excellent spirits ... because the decision has been taken. I shall ask you to tell them, and everyone the following: either I am allowed to work every day, to dictate for ten or twenty minutes, or I shall simply refuse all treatment.

*Doctor.* An ultimatum?

*Lenin.* Precisely — an ultimatum. My head is perfectly clear and my will sufficiently strong to insist on it.

*Doctor.* Vladimir Ilyich, if you're going to adopt that approach ... you'll deprive us of the opportunity to help you ...

*Lenin.* I adopt it only as a last resort ... when everything is at stake.

Suddenly a whole *mass of people* is once again in motion. Russia has begun to raise her voice. Meetings behind the lines, meetings at the front. People are talking with passion, with conviction. In the centre of the stage, surrounded by this seething mass, stands Lenin, his attention concentrated, sensitively picking up any sound, any suffering, unbending beneath the weight which presses down upon him before our eyes, for on the decision he must now take depends, in effect, the life or death of the newly-born state.

*Bolshevik.* Having learned of the German demands presented to our delegation at Brest-Litovsk, the executive committee of the Perm gubernia demands, in the name of the workers' revolutionary Urals, the immediate cessation of all negotiations with the Wilhelm government. A peace with imperialism, the surrender of the Baltic proletariat, which has already established its commune, to plunder by the Germans will be possible only when not one of us is left alive.

*Soldier.* Citizens Lenin and Sverdlov, Sirs, we who have suffered in the trenches for three years are sending our most humble request to you as our governing organ. Insist that the peace be signed, because you already know that everyone is tired of the war. And we, who have been suffering in the trenches for three years, are even more tired of it, and if our request is not satisfied, then if now the front is being opened up by regiments and divisions, and in January the whole front shall be opened up. It was Nicholas the Second and Grishka Rasputin<sup>3</sup> and other ministers who forced us to go to war, but who is forcing us now? The whole of the people are against the war, and we are sending you our most humble request to make peace in the shortest possible time so as not to leave you with your back against the wall, like Nicholas the Second. A soldier who has been in the trenches for three years, not three days, Kolarov.

*Bolshevik girl.* The Tsarev District Soviet of Deputies has unanimously decided to demand that the supreme organ of Soviet power reject the predatory conditions set by the Germans and that it defend the Republic to the end: revolutionary war till universal victory!

*Soldier.* To honourable Lenin and the others, we can't take the hunger and cold of the trenches any longer, we're completely exhausted, and we're getting letters from home saying that back there they're dying of starvation. Therefore we soldiers have had a talk and decided on one thing: whatever it costs, we're not staying at our positions any longer. We stayed here at the front for you, the Bolsheviks, because your words of exhortation seemed to come from our very hearts, but now things seem very different, you haven't given the people anything and life hasn't, as far as I can see, become any easier. We implore you to sign the peace, and if you don't get it done by January, we'll leave the front anyway, or even worse, we'll march on Petrograd and overthrow your government and put one in that will give the people peace. We beg you, Citizen-Comrade Lenin, to do all you can to get peace, and if you lose your life at the hand of executioners, your memory, like that of Jesus Christ, will be eternal. Give us peace! Give us peace! We don't need anything else. Private Sharonov of the 12th Siberian Regiment on behalf of a hundred voices.

*Lenin.* Why do you say that the Bolsheviks haven't given the people anything?

*Soldier.* Well, what have the Bolsheviks given us? Only promises, and who hasn't given us promises?

*Lenin.* And land? Have you read the Decree on Land?

*Soldier.* Yes, here it is! Here. (*He takes a carefully folded piece of paper from somewhere in the front of his jacket.*) But what use is your decree to me, at the front?

*Lenin.* But it gives you the right to land, the right you wanted so much.

*Soldier.* It's still just a piece of paper. (*He carefully puts it away.*) If the soldier remains in the trenches, then this is not the right to land, but to a six-foot hole in the ground. That's the right Kerensky gave me, but I didn't take it. So how are you, any better? No, citizen-comrade, send us back home. Let me touch the land which the Soviet is going to give me, and then I'll tell you whether the Bolsheviks have given us land or not.

*Worker.* The Kupyansk District Soviet, having listened to the peace terms, notes that their acceptance would mean the death of the revolution. We categorically demand the immediate declaration of a revolutionary war. The working class as one man will support its government. Forwards!

*Lenin (to a colleague).* Yes, Bukharin doesn't live in

the clouds. He attends meetings like these. What is more, according to Yakov Mikhailovich, many party committees in the Ukraine, the Urals, the Volga region and Siberia are also against accepting the German conditions. There is a similar mood in Petrograd and Moscow. That is Bukharin's stand.

*Colleague.* But perhaps the mood of the committee leaders isn't the mood of the mass of the party?

*Lenin.* Mood... That's just it: mood... (*He laughs.*) Of course! (*He intones.*) Mo-o-d! Mood...

*Colleague.* Yes, today Bukharin is reflecting the mood of part of the working class, plus the national-patriotic sentiments of the petty bourgeoisie, the intelligentsia and the urban traders. Why does that amuse you?

*Lenin.* The point is that the passing moods of a class and the fundamental interests of that same class may not coincide. Why is the party in such a mood? Illusions born of easy victories from October to January ... a spontaneous protest against German arrogance ... it's difficult to take in such a rapid transition from victorious attack on Russian capital to shameful, humiliating retreat before German capital! And so these moods are also reflected by Bukharin and his supporters. However, the point is that when the question becomes that of the survival of Soviet power, the workers will immediately sober up, whereas Nikolai Ivanovich will continue to sing the same tune out of sheer inertia.

*Colleague.* Oh, not necessarily ... you're not being fair to him ... he's young ... impetuous ... only thirty...

*Lenin.* How I wish you were right... Time will tell. For the moment he is accusing us of having the peasantry, the declassed mass of soldiers, the small traders, the peasants, as the social base of our position. No, my dear friends, we are expressing the fundamental interests of the Russian working class, and they, moreover, are in an indissoluble alliance with the peasantry. When the peasant touches with his own hand the land which the revolution has given him, when he sees the danger of losing it rise up before him, then he will march out to defend it. Nikolai Ivanovich is proposing that we leap over that stage of development which the peasantry has not yet passed through. If we try to leap over it, we'll break our necks. What is the main thing now? Immediate withdrawal from the war, peace. Yes, that's the right policy!

*Colleague.* Is that intended for me?

*Lenin.* For me. Whatever follies and errors we may have committed in other areas, if we see this through, the revolution will live on.

*Colleague.* How can we see it through when the Central Committee has given its support to Trotsky's formula "neither peace nor war"?

*Lenin.* Nonetheless Trotsky will sign the peace.

*Colleague.* What makes you say that?

*Lenin.* Yesterday, before the delegation left for Brest, I had a talk with him in private. As the head of the government, I gave the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs plenipotentiary powers and the categorical instruction to sign the peace treaty if there is a German ultimatum. I acted on the basis of the decision taken by the Congress of Soviets, which gave the Council of People's Commissars unlimited powers in the question of concluding peace.

*Colleague.* And what did Trotsky say?

*Lenin.* He promised. He gave me his word that he would sign the peace.

*Colleague.* Isn't that a rather fragile basis?

*Lenin (shrugging his shoulders).* I know, lies are being told about my relations with him. I do justice to his organisational abilities... he does have them ... but all the same he's not our man. With us, but not ours. Ambitious. And there's something bad about him ... from Lassalle.

*Colleague.* So what do you base your hopes on?

*Lenin.* He assured me, gave me his word that he would sign the peace.

The light changes.

*German General.* Today negotiations were renewed in Brest. The Russian delegation is headed by Trotsky, who, so they say, has been given some special powers by Lenin. He was obviously dragging out the proceedings. I am not going to help him, and in a few days I shall categorically insist on having a reply.

*Commissar.* Petrograd. To Lenin. Today, the tenth of February, in reply to a categorical demand made by the Germans, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs Trotsky declared that Russia is withdrawing from the war, but is not signing a peace treaty, and will issue a total demobilisation order to the troops.

*Lenin (exploding in anger).* He betrayed us!



*Commissar.* He is absolutely convinced that the Germans will not attack, and that, as a result of his tactical move, Russia will be spared the horrors of war and help to arouse revolution in Germany.

*Russian General.* Petrograd. To Lenin. Today at 7 p. m. I received an official message from General Hoffmann to the effect that on the eighteenth of February, at noon, the ceasefire agreed to by the Russian Republic comes to an end and a state of war will recommence. Military consultant to the Russian delegation, General Samoilov.

*Commissar.* Today, the eighteenth of February, at twelve o'clock, German troops moved into the attack. There is panic in Dvinsk. The army is in flight, offering no resistance. Three quarters of the 12th army defending the approaches to Petrograd have abandoned their positions and retreated to the rear.

A sea of humanity is swirling around Lenin's study. *Peasants* wearing grey greatcoats are leaving the front-lines, unwilling to fight. At the railway stations they are fighting for places on the trains, travelling on the roofs, abandoning their military equipment — cannons and machine-guns but are keeping their rifles... Small *worker detachments* are going out to meet them: they are poorly armed, they will take up the fight at the distant approaches to Petrograd, and will halt the enemy at the cost of their lives, but for how long? Meanwhile the disordered retreat continues...

*Bolshevik.* Rezhitsa has been abandoned, Lutsk and Minsk are under attack, an advance has begun on Pskov. There is virtually no army, and Petrograd is under mortal threat.

*Worker.* The peace terms are unacceptable, but the situation obliges us to agree. Novokhoporsky Soviet Deputies.

*Woman worker.* Petrograd. To Lenin. The Kasimov Soviet has decided to demand that peace be concluded. To continue the war means to lose the revolution and Soviet power. Results of the vote: for peace — forty-four, against — thirty-six.

*German General.* Our advance is continuing smoothly. This is the most comic war anyone could imagine. It is being waged exclusively along the railway tracks. Around a hundred infantrymen with machine-guns and one cannon are put on board a train and sent to the nearest station. They seize the station, arrest the Bolsheviks and move on. None of the Russians wants to fight. To be fair, one must

admit that near Pskov and in the Ukraine we met with fierce resistance. Worker detachments hastily put together by Lenin are fighting courageously, but what can they do? The Bolsheviks agreed long ago to our previous conditions, but we are in no hurry to reply. We are advancing further and further. This very morning an ultimatum was dispatched to the Bolsheviks. It must be admitted that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Supreme Command have done some good work. The ultimatum contains all the demands that could possibly be made. On these conditions, Russia loses four per cent of her territory with a population of forty-six million, that is, twenty-six per cent, coal — seventy-five per cent, pig-iron — seventy-three per cent, harvest — thirty-seven per cent, railways — twenty-six per cent, and so on. The Bolshevik headquarters staff has to meet to discuss the ultimatum. I very much doubt they will accept it, because it has been written in such a way as to cause the Bolsheviks to take offence and decline. That would suit us perfectly: we shall then advance on St. Petersburg and destroy this infection menacing the whole civilised world.

Fifteen *people* advance to the centre of the stage.

*First man.* Please take your seats, comrades.

Everyone takes a seat. Only Lenin continues to pace up and down in his corner, five strides in one direction, five strides back again.

*First man.* Before opening the meeting, I would like to say, on behalf of the members of the Central Committee who supported the signing of the peace treaty, that telegraphes and resolutions are constantly arriving at the Smolny from the provinces: a radical change is taking place in the mood of party organisations and Soviets. There has clearly been a sobering up and an end to illusions, a mass transition to the position adopted by Vladimir Ilyich. And now to the main business. I propose that the question be simply whether to accept or reject the new German conditions. We have very little time — the reply is expected by seven in the morning. I consider it my duty to remind you that we are, in effect, about to decide the fate of our revolution.

*Second man.* These “conditions” reveal a loss of all pro-

priety. In my opinion we should ask Berlin and Vienna what they actually want.

*Third man.* Do you really not know? I think we could simply begin peace negotiations without signing any treaty. That way we'll win a breathing space.

*Fourth man.* There'll be no breathing space, that's merely dreaming. If we sign a peace treaty, that will intensify German imperialism. Let's face up to the truth. We won't save anything by signing this treaty.

*Lenin* continues to pace up and down in his corner: five strides in one direction, five strides back again.

*Fifth man.* There is also the moral price of a compromise — an ulcer which eats at the soul. It's wrong to throw the Ukrainians and Byelorussians to the wolves. It's wrong to save our own lives at the price of their suffering.

*Sixth man.* For me it is absolutely axiomatic that without a European revolution we shan't be able to build genuine socialism. So, if we are doomed to perish in any case, why not perish with honour? Why not draw to ourselves the forces of the German army and thereby help the German workers? It's worth risking the loss of Soviet power, which is now becoming a pure formality, in the interests of world revolution.

*Seventh man.* We could, and I'm convinced we still can organise a revolutionary war which would deliver such a powerful blow against Germany, would so unleash the forces now fermenting there, that a revolution would occur very quickly. All it would take is just one push, and we can supply it. It's time to stop talking about peaceful coexistence between the Soviet Republic and imperialists. It's not possible in practice too: what imperialist will look on calmly as his gravedigger rises to his feet? And it's theoretically inconsistent as well, because the interests of world revolution demand from us not peace and diplomatic treaties, but relentless battle, our death, but not capitulation!

*First man.* And what is the solution?

*Seventh man.* Set the peasant against the Germans, gather all our forces together into one fist and strike the insolent snout of the German militarist, strike him so hard he'll learn never to do it again! That will be a splendid

warning to the whole of imperialism if it should ever think of talking to us like that again.

*Lenin (in an explosion of unbelievable force).* Enough! Enough! I refuse to tolerate it a moment longer! You can't play games with war! We can't afford to wait even an hour! To wait means to hand the Russian revolution over to destruction! If we make enquiries of the Germans again, it will be paper, not politics! Signing a peace treaty — that's politics! We write papers, they seize cities, railway stations, trains, and we are dying. These conditions don't affect Soviet power, and we must sign them as soon as possible and not get involved in another round of negotiations. If you don't sign them, then within a week you'll be signing the death sentence of Soviet power! They're hoping we'll refuse to sign. How is it you fail to realise that, comrades? We could have signed a peace treaty which posed no threat to the revolution a long time ago, but we didn't. Time, life, has answered the question: was Trotsky's step a genial tactical move as he thought it was, or a grandiose and stupid adventure which, in effect, betrayed the interests of the revolution, was a gift to Wilhelm, as I believed it was. Where does Trotsky get his self-assurance? And now people have to pay for that self-assurance with their lives, and the revolution — with these predatory conditions. There is the price of political error! Yet once again something is not clear, again there are new projects. The clock is ticking off our last minutes. Bukharin has clambered onto his hobby-horse of revolutionary war and can't climb down without assistance. It does not concern him that the peasant does not want war and will not follow us. If Bukharin requires that he follow — he will follow! Each minute there are hundreds of facts pushing us to the edge of the abyss, but facts cannot convince you... What, then, can my words achieve? If the European revolutions are delayed, if fate has doomed us to be alone, then we shall build socialism by ourselves — genuine, full-blooded socialism, if we are not asses and don't play the fool! To distort Marxism as is being suggested here is not merely to play the fool but something worse! We shall not push anyone! We shall cooperate, assist revolutionary movements, but they will develop on their own basis. However, perhaps we have had enough theory. We can strike the insolent snout of German militarism with our speeches for a long time, and then be amazed to discover that they are already in Petrograd. Left-wing phrasemongering is still phrase-

mongering. If the supporters of Bukharin have been able to talk themselves as far as the dreadful, monstrous reference to the possible loss of Soviet power, then we have reached the end of the road! That is the mentality of a frenzied petty-bourgeois! Now, here, the requiem is being intoned for the Russian revolution. It is more than flesh and blood can stand to be present at it. Spare me! An end must be put to the politics of the revolutionary phrase! If these politics continue, I shall immediately leave the Council of People's Commissars and the Central Committee and appeal directly to the masses! I shall not tolerate revolutionary phrasemongering any longer! Not for another second! Otherwise I humbly request your permission to resign!

Silence descends. Everyone is shaken.

*Fourth man.* Vladimir Ilyich, did I hear correctly? Is that an ultimatum? You will leave the Council of People's Commissars and the Central Committee? But that would mean a split in the party!

*Lenin.* I do not issue an ultimatum in order to withdraw it. There is not the slightest hesitation in my mind. Either — or.

A tense pause.

*Second man.* Comrades, we have heard the statement by Vladimir Ilyich. What is there to say about it? Only one thing: we cannot conduct a revolutionary war if the party is divided. One might spend a long time presenting one's objections to Vladimir Ilyich, but that is not the point for the moment. We need the maximum unity. This we do not have, and therefore I refuse to take responsibility for voting in favour of war.

*Fourth man.* I agree with you. If the party were sufficiently strong to survive division and the resignation of Lenin then we could take a decision. For the moment — no.

*Eighth man.* The solution proposed by Lenin will take the revolution to its death, and therefore I shall not follow down that path. If Lenin threatens to resign, you should not take fright. Power must be taken without Vladimir Ilyich. We must go to the front and do all we can!

*First man.* Who else? You?

*Ninth man.* I forgo my right to speak.

*First man.* Who else?



Everyone is silent.

Then we shall take our decision. (*Instinctively he wishes to put off the moment.*) Perhaps someone else wants to say a word?

Everyone is silent.

Well, then we shall vote on just one question: whether or not to accept the new German conditions.

*Fourth man (unable to hold back).* Comrades! There should be a break before the vote! We need to be calm! We are all tense! We are not listening to one another! An irrevocable disaster may befall our entire party, our entire movement! We are on the brink of a schism! I demand a break!

*First man.* Does anyone else support the call for a break? No one. Then we shall proceed with the vote.

*Seventh man.* But I cannot vote in favour of the rope for my comrades.

*Lenin (furious).* But I can?!!

*First man.* Who is in favour of accepting the new conditions? One ... two ... three ... four ... five ... six ... seven ... Seven out of fifteen. Who is against? One ... two ... three ... four ... Who has abstained? One ... two ... three ... four... So, the decision for Russia to withdraw immediately from the war according to the proposed conditions has been adopted by seven votes to four with four abstentions ...

*Lenin* sinks down into an armchair, where he sits pensively. The light changes.

*Lenin (to himself and to us).* The interests of world revolution, my dear comrades, are no less dear to us than to you... The question is — how to help it, how to work for it? We are duty-bound to carry out our main international obligation — that of building a new society, of giving the people of the world a bright and realised idea, of contrasting war, corruption and the chicanery of capitalism against peace, integrity and the nobility of socialism. What do we need to achieve this? Peace or war? We need to construct, and therefore for us the thirst for peace is not a tactical trick during a moment of powerlessness, but the meaning of our politics, of our lives...

*Fotiyeva* appears.

*Fotiyeva*. Good-day, Vladimir Ilyich.

*Lenin*. Hello, What is the date today?

*Fotieva*. The twenty-fifth of December, nineteen twenty-two.

*Lenin*. What's the weather like outside?

*Fotieva*. A snowstorm. Frost. What's the matter, Vladimir Ilyich? You don't even want to look at me, and I have news for you.

*Lenin*. Don't you remember what happened in the ancient world to those who brought bad news?

*Fotiyeva* (*smiling*). And if the news is good?

*Lenin*. Really? Then why haven't you told me? Just look at her! She tells me about snowstorms, about frost... I'm saying nothing, nothing.

*Fotiyeva*. The Politbureau commission has had a meeting with the doctors about your hours of work. They have decided as follows: Lenin is permitted to give dictation every day for five or ten minutes.

*Lenin* (*cheerily*). "Hurrah! We are breaking through, the Swedes are bending!" <sup>4</sup> Please take a seat.

*Fotiyeva*. What? Right now?

*Lenin*. When else? What if they suddenly change their minds? Right now.

*Fotiyeva*. Vladimir Ilyich, it must not be in the form of correspondence, and Lenin should not expect any answer to these messages.

*Lenin*. To the devil with them... (*Cheerfully*.) Well, let's begin.

*Fotiyeva*. Vladimir Ilyich...

*Lenin*. No, no, please let's get on with the work. Anything else can come later. If they have allowed me ten minutes, it would be a crime on our part not to turn those ten minutes into half an hour.

*Fotiyeva*. What do you mean?

*Lenin*. We've been given an inch, so surely we must take a mile? Shall we refute ancient wisdom?

*Fotiyeva*. You will have your little joke.

*Lenin*. Yes, I love a joke... Take this down! (*He dictates*.) "In our Soviet Republic, the social system is based on cooperation between two classes: the workers and the peasants... If serious class disagreements should arise between these classes, then a split will be inevitable, but our social

system does not necessarily have to contain within it the causes of such an inevitable split, and the main task of the Central Committee and our party as a whole is to follow carefully any situation which could lead to a split and prevent it..." And prevent it... (*He dictates.*) "For in the final account the fate of our Republic will depend on whether the peasant mass will march alongside the working class or whether it allows itself to be separated from the workers, split off from them..." Lydia Aleksandrovna, how were these questions dealt with at the last meeting of the Politbureau?

*Fotiyeva.* At the last meeting, Vladimir Ilyich, it was stated that neither friends nor members of the family should tell Lenin anything about political matters in order not to provide him with material to think and worry about.

*Lenin.* Yes, of course, I do not have enough material to think and worry about...

*Fotiyeva.* Then why add to it? Vladimir Ilyich, you're not being fair. You know very well that you are not allowed to worry yourself.

*Lenin.* The medics have lost little time in getting you on their side!

*Fotiyeva.* Vladimir Ilyich... The decision has been taken, and as it has, it must be obeyed.

*Lenin.* But why should we be slaves to ourselves?

*Fotiyeva.* Vladimir Ilyich, it's a matter of principle.

*Lenin.* I'll say no more, no more. If it's a matter of principle, then we shall not be turned aside... All around us everything is moving and changing, but for us it's a matter of principle. How amazingly we manage to combine desperate daring with timidity of thought in the face of the slightest changes. Well, and what about meetings? I hope...

*Fotiyeva.* Meetings have been categorically forbidden.

*Lenin.* Now that is not very sensible... Such wisdom of state to begin with, and then nothing... A pity. There is the possibility of seizing hold of details which I won't hear in a single report. Do you know how much you can appreciate through details? We wouldn't be able to take a single correct decision if we didn't know the details.

*Fotiyeva.* It's precisely these details that the doctors fear most of all.

*Lenin.* Can't we just sit side by side and smile at each other? Then help me, for old times' sake. Let Khariton and Shpilka come in. They've been trying to see me for days...

(*Mischievously.*) Or else they'll climb in through the window!

*Fotiyeva (not noticing the irony).* What do you mean — through the window?

*Lenin.* I mean just that: old conspirators from the underground. They'll just come in through the window. You know them. Shpilka will play his violin. He's the best violinist in the party. He knows six pieces already. And Khariton will sing...

*Fotiyeva laughs, and as she does two men appear — a bearded man and a man carrying a violin. They signal to Lenin: "Shhh, quiet!"*

Khariton is convinced that if I listen to them, I shall get better immediately. There is one ballad we are all particularly fond of. The music is by Tchaikovsky, but the words — forgive me for saying so, are not too good — they are by Great Prince Konstantin Konstantinovich Romanov, but I have to confess that I like them.

The violin sounds, the bearded man sings:

*I threw open the window — couldn't breathe the close air —*

*And before it I quietly knelt.*

*The fantastic spring night, so enchanting and clear,  
In my face wafted lilacs' sweet scent...*

*Fotiyeva (laughing).* To the deuce with you, Vladimir Ilyich... (*She leaves.*)

*Lenin (joins in the singing).*

*Then a nightingale sang somewhere far in the trees,  
And I listened in sadness and sorrow...*

*Khariton and Shpilka disappear.*

(*Speaking to himself and to us.*) We shall not be slaves to ourselves...

Suddenly, in the twinkling of an eye, *the crowd* has changed: people are wearing fur caps and have shorn-off shotguns slung over their shoulders. The storm of a peasant revolt sweeps across the stage: village Bolsheviks are being taken to be shot ... and alongside them are placed the poor peasants ... there is chaos in the

village Soviets ... those working for the state food organs are being manhandled ... the cottages of those who support Soviet power are being set on fire ... the dreadful whirlwind of a kulak rebellion! In the spring of nineteen twenty-one, a worker *Butuzov* and a commissar from Tambov are sitting in Lenin's study while *Lenin* himself paces up and down, then stops, listens, and resumes his pacing.

*Commissar.* The Antonov bands are literally drowning the whole of the Tambov region in blood. They're on the rampage, plundering, killing, inciting discontent with food requisitioning. It's particularly difficult to combat them because one day they swell, the next they shrink...

*Lenin.* What exactly do you mean?

*Commissar.* Today there are a thousand of them, tomorrow there's no one left. At night they get onto their horses and set off on their attack, and then when day comes they return to their homes. You can't tell a bandit from a peasant.

*Lenin (to Butuzov).* Are you from Siberia?

*Butuzov.* I'm from Moscow, I was sent to Omsk to work on food provisioning.

*Lenin.* Your impressions?

*Butuzov.* Vladimir Ilyich, I've been a Bolshevik since nineteen four, and nothing can change my convictions. My communist spirit is strong, but when you see what is happening in the villages, it's enough to break your heart. A failed harvest, shortage of fodder, dying cattle, drought and fire, the land under cultivation constantly shrinking. And so on.

*Lenin.* And what are the peasants saying?

*Butuzov.* Nothing good. "Why should we bend our backs, they say, they'll still take everything. We'll sow as much grain as we need to feed ourselves, and they can do without."

*Lenin.* What are the food supply organs doing?

*Butuzov.* The special agent travels around the district shouting: "I'll fill the requisition quota one hundred per cent, whatever it takes. If you don't cooperate, I'll put a bullet through my skull, but before I do, I'll cut down a thousand of you." And so on. The mood among the peasants is really nasty. All it would take is just a match, and the place will go up in flames, like Tambov.

*Lenin.* Your suggestions?

*Butuzov.* I don't know. I'm a factory man, not a villager. I know something needs to be done, but what — I don't know...



*Lenin.* What is your name?

*Butuzov.* Butuzov.

*Lenin.* Well, and what do you suggest?

*Commissar.* Today our gubernia committee decided to end requisitioning in the gubernia, and to release from prison the peasants who had joined the bands under coercion or out of ignorance.

*Lenin.* Of those you release from prison, send me a kulak, a middle peasant and a poor peasant... But preferably from among the older, more influential ones, the rural elders...

The light changes.

*Glyasser* conducts the "elders" into the study. They are wearing sheepskin or heavy cloth coats, and holding prison knapsacks in their hands.

*Lenin* (shaking hands with each of them and offering them a seat). Let me congratulate you on your release from prison. In my opinion that's not the place for a hard-working peasant to be just before the sowing season.

*Poor peasant.* If it's not the place, don't put us there!

*Lenin* (replying immediately). You shoot, set afire, kill, and Soviet power is supposed to stand by and applaud?

*Middle peasant.* We, citizen Ulyanov-Lenin, recognise and respect Soviet power, but you shouldn't treat us like this... That's why we went over to Antonov — out of ignorance.

*Poor peasant.* Not only do they take your grain away and won't believe things you say, but they even take it out on you. That's what a man can't stand, that's what's worst of all.

*Lenin.* If they take it out on you, it's a crime. That is not the policy of Soviet power.

*Poor peasant.* Will you put that in writing for me?

*Lenin.* I will, definitely.

*Middle peasant.* Citizen-comrade, I'll put it to you straight: I was a Green <sup>5</sup> until the Reds made a White of me.

*Kulak.* Citizen Lenin, we're not against communism, we don't have anything against it. We just want communism to stay away from us. Let communism exist by itself, and we — by ourselves.

*Lenin.* The state, the working class, needs bread. There is no one to provide it for us except you, the peasants. The worker will get stronger, build factories, and the peasant

will get everything he needs. That means the peasants must tighten their belts a little so the worker doesn't starve to death.

*Poor peasant.* The peasant and the worker should be linked together.

*Lenin.* How?

*Kulak.* If you'd open up trade, citizen Lenin...

*Middle peasant.* For us, peasants, the worst thing of all is the uncertainty.

*Lenin.* What do you mean?

*Middle peasant.* I mean the requisitioning. The peasant ploughs the soil and doesn't know what they'll take off him in the autumn. If he sows a lot, then they take a lot. If you sow just a little, just for yourself, then the country loses out, and they still take even the little you have sown. What's the peasant supposed to do? There's only one thing — Antonov.

*Kulak.* If you'd open up trade, citizen Lenin...

*Middle peasant.* What if requisitioning was replaced with payment in kind? In the spring you say: in autumn we want so much, and the rest is yours.

*Poor peasant (seeing the point).* That would be the end of Antonov.

The light changes. *Glyasser* is standing in front of Lenin.

*Lenin (handing over a thick file of papers).* These are the letters from the peasants. Make copies and send them to the members of the Central Committee and all the People's Commissars.

The alarming wail of factory sirens can be heard — first one, then a second, a third, a fourth, a fifth... *Two workers* come running into the study.

*First worker.* It's Goznak. They went on strike yesterday. This morning a worker was killed by agents provocateurs and they began to shout: "The Cheka is killing workers." Several more factories have joined the shut-down.

*Lenin.* The causes? I need to know the truth.

*Second worker.* The food situation is bad. Hunger.

*First worker.* The factories are virtually at a standstill. There's no work. We get by making just anything. Some begin to make cigarette lighters, others take bags — and off

into the countryside. We've only a handful of skilled workers as it is.

*Second worker.* Vladimir Ilyich, our worker has lost his strength, lost it completely... Russia now has a population of one hundred and thirty-five million, but the workers are just over one million... If things go on like this, if you and the party don't think of something, we won't be able to hold on to the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The light changes. A *Secretary of the Moscow Party Committee* appears.

*Lenin.* Well, and what does the Moscow Party Committee think about it?

*MPC Secretary.* The reason is quite clear — the food situation is bad, the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries have made use of it to stir up the people. We're now going to involve the gubernia Cheka.

*Lenin.* There's no need. Cancel that measure.

*MPC Secretary.* Why? All we need to do is strike the scoundrels, render them harmless and finish them off.

*Lenin.* Unfortunately, here in Moscow ninety out of every hundred party officials believe that it all boils down to that — finishing them off, rendering them harmless, striking them. But that is only half, even only a quarter, of what needs to be done. How many shut-downs have there been in the factories during this month?

*MPC Secretary.* Over a period of twenty-four days, work stopped at sixty-six factories.

*Lenin.* Food?

*Secretary.* Food. And they're asking for some changes to make things easier.

*Lenin.* The need for changes is recognised by everyone. The question is — what changes? Let's exploit the collective mind of the Moscow organisation, shall we?

*MPC Secretary.* We're busy with the trade union discussion.

*Lenin.* It's all a lot of noise, a lot of noise, but the people are expecting something else from us.

*MPC Secretary.* What are we to do about the shut-downs?

*Lenin.* Everyone now in Moscow should be sent to the factories... First of all, let's ask Kalinin ... he's close to the people ... has a remarkable ability to talk to workers and peasants... And Kirov's here... Artyom... Tomsy... Anatoly

Vasilyevich... Nogin... Tsyurupa... Kuibyshev... I'll go as well... Frunze... Yaroslavsky... Leave Sergo alone, he's gone down with a cold and a temperature... Telephone to Stalin and consult with him. Let him think who else we could send.

*MPC Secretary.* What should they say?

*Lenin.* The truth. We are moving from war to peace. The problems are enormous. Some of them we could not anticipate — we lack experience. Some are the result of mistakes by the Central Committee and the Council of People's Commissars. Mistakes with the distribution of fuel and food. It was my mistake. We're looking for a solution. We can't promise land flowing with milk ... but we'll do all we can.

*The Secretary of the Moscow Party Committee leaves.*

*(To Glyasser.)* Take a note for Briukhanov. Ten million roubles must be assigned immediately from the gold reserves to purchase grain. I realise that this will not solve the problem, but at least we can help the people a little.

*The light changes.*

*An official from the People's Commissariat for Agriculture appears.*

*Lenin.* Well, and what does the People's Commissariat for Agriculture have to tell us?

*Official.* In my opinion, the only solution to the crisis is to tighten and tighten again the press of state regulation, bringing it to every peasant household, to grip the peasant in a vice from which there is no way out. The army is no longer on active service at the front, and it can help ensure that our plan succeeds. That's the only way we'll be able to feed the towns and build heavy industry.

*Lenin.* You want to tighten the press, Trotsky — the screws. You seem to think like locksmiths... And aren't you frightened that we'll wear away the thread?

*Official.* For the moment that's a mere detail.

*Lenin.* No, it's not a mere detail. It means continuing the policy of war communism.<sup>6</sup>

*Official.* Yes, we must certainly continue it.

*Lenin.* It was necessary and wholly justified during the war, when it gave us the possibility of victory, of defending the Republic. However, can this policy raise the country up out

of the ruins? That's the point... At the moment the Central Committee is searching, weighing up, taking advice.

*Official.* This is not the time, Vladimir Ilyich! The process must be brought under control now, immediately, today!

*Lenin.* And doesn't it occur to you that when, in politics, you think only of the immediate result, you always lose in the long term? Or is it a case of the devil take tomorrow? So, once again coercion... And will that draw the peasant into building socialism?

*Official.* I think that the peasant will always, by his very nature, be hostile to socialism.

*Lenin (continuing).* But we shall undoubtedly draw him into destruction.

*Official.* It is a consistent, clear policy, and it can be implemented, I repeat, only with the help of the army, the Cheka organs and the judiciary. And if it is supported by skilful propaganda...

*Lenin.* Political twaddle in place of bread? I never expected to hear that from you. We are now facing the most serious internal crisis to strike Soviet Russia. I hope this is the first and the last time in our history that a significant part of the peasantry, not deliberately but instinctively, in terms of their mood, are opposed to us... Yet you are proposing to change nothing, to press ahead. Well, that's also a point of view. The peasantry is hostile to socialism — that's a point of view as well. Whether the peasantry will be the ally of the working class in building socialism or its enemy depends on us — yes, yes, on us alone! Ten or twenty years of the correct relationship with the peasantry and victory is assured, otherwise twenty to forty years of counterrevolution, white guards and terror. Either — or. There is no third alternative.

*Official.* Vladimir Ilyich, you have known me for some time, even when we operated underground. If I decided to come to you with my anxieties, that means I have cause for them.

*Lenin.* I don't doubt that at all.

*Official.* I don't sleep at night. I leaf through Marx. I could cite dozens of quotations: we ourselves are besmirching the nobility of our ideas, with our own hands we are resurrecting petty-bourgeois attitudes, declaring ourselves bankrupt before our own people and the whole world. At the Ninth Congress<sup>7</sup> we promised the transition to communism in the near future. Was that a deception? Even if we fail, is there any need to shout about it from the rooftops? I see



where you are tending from your notes and questions at the Council of People's Commissars, but it contradicts Marxism. It doesn't show even a trace of theory!

*Lenin (restrained at first, then becoming furious).* For us, theory is a tool, not an end in itself! How is it you can stockade yourself behind quotations and not see reality? It's not the growth of the petty bourgeoisie and petty capital you need to fear, but that a state of extreme hunger, need and lack of basic essentials is continuing far too long. This saps the strength of the proletariat, so that it is incapable of withstanding the pressure of petty-bourgeois vacillations and desperation. That is far worse. Yes, we promised the transition to communism in the near future because we supposed that the movement would proceed along a straight line. However, the movement proceeded differently. Are we to ignore that, to press ahead out of loyalty to resolutions? Who said that we are obliged to be idiots? We didn't ignore that. Let us tell the people the truth: only an agreement with the peasants can save the revolution in Russia. We must retreat. Retreat is not so dreadful when political power is in our hands. Illusions of self-deception are dreadful, fear of the truth is fatal. Marx did not leave us ready-made answers to every question. He taught us to analyse existing contradictions in order to anticipate and identify possibilities. Isn't it worthwhile being Marxists not only in word but also in deed? We must bend and break outdated ideas when this is necessary in the interests of the people. We will not, will not be slaves to ourselves!

The light changes. *A crowd of peasants* enter Lenin's study. They are wearing thick cloth coats, sheepskin coats. Only a few are wearing boots, the rest — bast shoes over footcloths. *Lenin*, a notebook in his hand, finds himself a place to one side. *A Bolshevik* sits at the head of the table.

*Bolshevik.* The meeting of non-party peasant delegates to the Congress of Soviets is opened.

*Voice.* The floor! The floor! Here we'll have our say at last, about everything!

*Bolshevik.* We have just one aim. We want to listen to the peasantry through you. Please, take the floor.

*First peasant.* I'm from Vologda. We can't live any longer under requisitioning. The peasant hands over his quota, and then they come a second time, and a third, and keep on coming until they've got every last grain. There's nothing left

to work for. We need trade. And get rid of those commissions of yours, the sooner the better. These commissions just protect their own. You need a commission higher up, but not to get gifts. At the moment they all take bribes.

*Second peasant.* From the Kursk gubernia. Requisitioning hits everyone, the idle and the hard-working, and that's very unfair. The poorest peasants need to learn from the more successful, the hard-working should be encouraged — they're the ones who'll supply you with bread. We're tired of fine words from the commissars. Your people just carry briefcases but do nothing. If you can't force them to do something — leave it to us, and we'll do everything ourselves.

*Third peasant.* We're from the Cherepovets gubernia. Sometimes we're told we're idlers, but the fact is we haven't got ploughs or harrows. You can't come down on the poor man and get a lot from him. There should be a law that says you have to help the poor peasant. Take it away from the rich and give it to us. Force is to be used, definitely.

There is an explosion of indignation.

*Fourth peasant.* The Ryazan gubernia. I haven't seen any idlers, but as for kulaks, deserters, these there are.

A burst of applause.

But the requisitioning must end. With us things were so bad that they put guns to our heads. People are really angry about it. God forbid that it should come to war, the peasants are in a bad mood — so bear it in mind. As they say in the Caucasus, where I served: "Let the thinking man think on it."

*Fifth peasant.* There aren't any kulaks now.

*Shouts.* There are, there are!

*Fifth peasant.* We're from Tula Gubernia. Everyone's been levelled. It's just as bad for everyone! Women and children are driven out to cut down firewood, and they arrive there, sparsely dressed, crying.

*Sixth peasant.* I'll cut firewood for you under the lash! But you can't run farming with a whip. I'm from the village of Gnilki in the Kostroma gubernia. You want a way out of the ruin? Then let Soviet power look for support to the peasants, like to a crutch. At the moment the peasants don't trust you.

*Lenin.* And can that be mended by a tax?

*Sixth peasant.* I think so. I sympathise with the Communists, but I'm not joining the party, because I go to church. I don't agree with the rituals, but I believe in God.

*Lenin.* And what do you think: if we announce the tax in advance, will the peasants sow more?

*Sixth peasant.* Yes. It's in their interests, isn't it? Just say: one half, for example, is for us, and the rest — do as you like.

*Lenin.* And how will the peasant dispose of his surplus? Sell it? That means there must be trade.

*All.* Well???

*Seventh peasant.* And I, my dear gentlemen-comrades, come from the Moscow gubernia. I've seen three tsars: Alexander the emancipator, and Alexander the peacemaker, and Nicholas the wine-trader—and I say thank God there aren't any anointed any more. When we had the tsars, I used to sit on my stove with the cockroaches, without land or bread, and now look where I am — at the Bolshoi as a delegate to the congress. And I tell you, as the oldest here: if we have taxes instead of requisitioning, then we'll put Soviet agriculture on its feet. That means the worker has held out his hand to us, and we'll take it. We'll work honestly, above-board, get on with our business, only don't forget Karl Marx. It's quite simple really: a man has two hands, and it's his duty to work with one of them for the state, and the other for himself. Then everything will be scientific. When there was requisitioning, I buried my grain in the ground, too, but now I'll keep it openly, I won't fear anyone, because I'll be the first to pay my tax. In Russia the peasant is the foundation. Just like here in this theatre: the walls are the peasantry, the roof is the worker, the windows and doors — the intelligentsia. Take off the roof, and the rain pours in. Stupid. Fasten up the windows and doors and you can't breathe. Stupid. Undermine the walls and the whole building falls down — the roof collapses, the windows and doors are smashed. That's even more stupid. If the peasant perishes, the whole of Russia perishes. That's what Karl Marx said, and his younger brother by name of Engels.

*Bolshevik.* Well done, Grandad. You spoke from the heart. Thank you.

*Seventh peasant.* You're being very nice to us. You aren't thinking of trying to make us Communists?

*Lenin.* Don't let them, old man, don't let them make you

a Communist. We have more than enough ostensible Communists as it is!

*The peasants disappear.*

*(To Glyasser.)* Make copies of these notes and send them to all the comrades with this comment... For the information of members of the Central Committee and People's Commissars. The following notes on the statements and declarations made at a non-party meeting of peasants was drawn up by Lenin, who requests that you familiarise yourselves with them.

*Glyasser leaves.*

Russia begins to move, to talk, to stir. *Lenin*, an old, threadbare coat over his shoulders, is pacing the stage listening to what the people are shouting about, what the village is saying, and what it is not saying.

*(To himself and us.)* And what if ... we satisfied the peasants' wishes for a grain tax instead of requisitioning?... Yes... That's the essence... That's it exactly... Basically we were thinking of it in the spring of nineteen eighteen, when we had a short, peaceful breathing space. But, of course, it would be a new stage ... a new economic policy ... a turnabout at full speed...

The roar of artillery cannon interrupts him.

*Commissar.* Vladimir Ilyich! A mutiny in Kronstadt! There has been a general meeting of sailors, workers and Red Army soldiers. They've adopted an anti-Soviet resolution. Kronstadt is refusing to recognise the authority of the Council of People's Commissars and the All-Russia Central Executive Committee. A rebel "Provisional Revolutionary Committee" has been set up. The leader of events is thought to be the former tsarist general, Kozlovsky. Their slogan is "Soviet Power without Communists!"

*Lenin (to himself, to us, to the comrades standing round him, controlling himself only with difficulty).* I loathe sugary official-communist lies! Two weeks ago the Paris newspapers were writing detailed accounts of the mutiny. I telephoned to Zinoviev in Petrograd: "What's happening in Kronstadt? How are things?" "Everything's in order! Every-

thing's under control! Temporary and unimportant difficulties which are being overcome." For two weeks I've been fed with official rubbish to protect Zinoviev's honour. We're being destroyed by lies! And the whole of the White Guard has been laughing at us: either they're deaf, blind and dumb, can't see what's under their very nose, or else they're pompous officials — "they prefer lofty deception to the darkness of base truth" ... Two weeks... Do you realise what could have been done in two weeks? It is the duty of the party to forestall such things! How could you let the situation reach this pitch? The truth should not depend on who it best serves! Shame upon all of us, shame and disgrace! (*He paces angrily up and down his study.*) And now we'll have to use guns... Yesterday we could speak, now we have to use guns... There's the cost of the luxury of delayed discussions! If the congress had met on the sixth of February, as had been planned earlier, and had adopted, a month ago, a resolution on replacing requisitioning with a grain tax, we would have knocked the trump-card out of the hands of the Parisian strategists. If pigs had wings... You don't weep over the hair of the beheaded.

*Commissar.* Vladimir Ilyich, Kronstadt's cannons and ships are trained on Petrograd. They're demanding a shift of power — "Soviets without Communists!"

*Lenin.* A fine slogan... A bridge that the White Guard will cross over... Everything's come together in one tight knot — reaction against the burden of war communism, which was the breeding-ground of revolt, and our own delay, and the skilful — that one must admit — work of our bosom "friends". In a country like ours, a petty-bourgeois counter-revolution is worse than Denikin, Kolchak and Yudenich put together. That means we must work with triple energy to carry through our new policy, which we have all accepted unanimously, in order to eliminate once and for all the gap, the fissure between the working class and the peasantry, between the party and the masses ... a fissure which some people abroad, and at home as well, would like to turn into a chasm... (*He steps forward.*) Comrade delegates to the party congress. The enemy, having failed with intervention, is now seeking to blow us up from within. Our answer is calm and concentrated: the party will not tolerate for one moment any abcess on the body of the country. There can be no talk of coexisting with the enemies of the revolution, either today, or tomorrow, or ever. Let no one entertain the slightest



doubts about that. This fortress can be taken only from the sea. The ice has begun to move and is not strong. The presidium is of the opinion that the units of the Red Army who are to storm the Kronstadt forts should be led by the flower of our party — the delegates to this congress. Volunteers are requested to come onto the stage.

A pause. The tense, tragic music of forthcoming battle. Then, from the hall and from behind the scenes, from every side *people* have begun to move towards the stage. They keep on coming, as if there is no end to them. One minute passes, another — and before us we see a massive wall in the centre of which stands Lenin.

## CURTAIN

## PART TWO

Only five minutes have passed since *Vladimir Ilyich* stepped across the threshold of his study. Now he is standing by the table. He takes out a bunch of keys and, turning round rather clumsily, drops it on the floor, starts, and his hand moves instinctively to his neck, where he was shot... This movement plunges him back into the sounds of the last day of August nineteen eighteen: first three shots follow one another in sharp succession. Then the horrified shouting of many people shatters the quiet of the study, the walls of which have already disappeared.

*Lenin.* Comrades ... stay calm ... remain organised ... Comrade Gil ... stay calm ... have they caught him or not?... A woman?... No, no, I don't need to be carried... I'll make my own way to the car... No, not to the hospital... to the Kremlin ... to the Kremlin... Forgive me, comrade, it's blood and I may stain you with it. There's no need to take your shirt off... Well, thank you... I'll return it to you... There's no need to inform my family... Nothing so extraordinary ... it can happen to any revolutionary... No, there's no need to carry me... I'll make my own way... It's only on the second floor... I know the staircase quite well ... only fifty-two steps... I can manage ... twenty-five ... twenty-six ... just take my jacket off, will you?... That's better... The jacket feels very heavy for some reason... fifty-two... Hello, Manyasha ... what a stupid thing to happen ... they've ruined my arm... I'll lie down ... if you don't mind ... just unlace my shoes for me ... it's difficult for me to bend down... It's just one of those things, an assassination attempt ... a professional risk in politics... Tell Nadya that it's only a slight wound ... doctor ... Comrade Weissbrot ... is it the end? Please understand ... don't try to spare me ... is it the end? ... What do you mean ... don't think about it ... then I'll ask ... how soon is the end?...

I'm not a young lady... I'm a fighter, just like those at the front ... I've been wounded... I must know ... the truth... You're a Communist ... a Bolshevik... there's no need to try to spare me ... it's very important ... I must speak with Sverdlov ... there are a few little matters I must attend to ... it always happens at the wrong time ... there's always something that still needs to be done ... warn me in advance ... your word is enough for me ... question that woman... Felix must be sent for ... he has a keen nose for the truth ... and also ... a worker came with me ... he took his shirt off... it will have to be washed and returned to him ... better still, a new one ... tell Nadya ... only I don't remember his surname ... but he was a worker ... he was to leave for the front ... he's one of our gold reserve ... their tragedy is ... they're the first to defend the revolution ... the first to die... And who replaces them?... They must be preserved, preserved ... not squandered ... they are the heaven ... the foundation ... that's the point...

The sounds of nineteen eighteen fade away... In front of *Lenin* stands the worker *Butuzov*.

*Butuzov*. Our lathes stand next to each other, and we live quite close. I've been in the party since nineteen four, and he joined a little earlier. Everything together, everything shared: world war, October, Civil War... and so on. We met again at the factory. The people around us are all new. We're not interested in noisy propaganda. We keep our eyes open, and where necessary we say our piece. His name's Yan Karlovich.

*Lenin*. A Latvian?

*Butuzov*. I couldn't say exactly, haven't asked. Before the revolution we had just one dream — to read books. It all began with the writer Herzen, who said straight out that a book is a spiritual legacy from one generation to the next, the order given by the watchman going off duty to the watchman coming to take his place.

*Lenin*. Could you say that again, about the watchman?

*Butuzov*. I'm saying just what the writer said. My memory isn't overburdened, so I remember straight off. A book is the order given by the watchman going off duty to the watchman coming to take his place.

*Lenin*. Thank you.

*Butuzov*. In the evenings, because of a certain tiredness,

we used to relax with a glass of beer and think, and then we fell into a regular fever — we read avidly, and got others to join us. Karlych got through ten in a month, and I got through twelve, sometimes the other way round. And so it went on. We both have the same interest in life — the building of socialism, and the more we read, the more we begin to oppose each other. We used to argue so much that our womenfolk threw us outside, because it mattered to us where things would go and who would be in charge. One day Karlych arrived looking very put out, really gloomy. He'd been listening to a speech by the People's Commissar for Military Affairs. We're both strong Communists, nothing could make us bend except a bullet, and we both of us agree about the aim, but we both see different ways of getting there, and so we scrap occasionally. But this time I didn't recognise him. Well, there it is, says Karlych, the international situation isn't in our favour, no sign of a world revolution, and without it we won't be able to build socialism anyway, and so the economic revival of Russia is possible only on the basis of militarised labour in the town and the country, and we'll develop industry at the expense of the peasants, by plundering them. There's really no other way, he says; and so we've just got to harden our hearts and agree. And so on. Well, of course, I lost my temper, stood up, and began yelling at him.

*Lenin.* And what did you yell at him?

*Butuzov.* I yelled one thing — that he would weep for shame, but I didn't quote any facts. And Karlych said: "Stop barking, I feel as sick as a dog myself, so explain properly." I took a week to prepare my answer. A crowd gathered to listen to us — no room even to spit. And I gave it to them so hard, Vladimir Ilyich, gave them the plan for socialism that they all began to weep for shame. Everyone except Karlych.

*Lenin.* But what did you say to them?

*Butuzov.* I quoted your words.

*Lenin.* Mine?

*Butuzov.* Why else did I ask for a week? I read, studied, thought about the difficult bits — worked it out for myself. You can check, but if I got something wrong, tell me straight. As many know from their own experience, I told them officially, the reason for world injustice is private property. Once, long before our time, it was even condemned in the Bible. Those are my words so far, yours come later. In place of private property, every decent man on earth, whatever

his origins or nationality, dreamt of collective property, but didn't know how to organise it. Karl Marx found out first and told everyone — by revolution, for which you need a class and a party. There was a class in Russia, and as for who made the party with his comrades — I shan't name names as everyone knows. So there's a class, and there's a party, and how the revolution happened we also know. The new life was only just beginning when we had to leave it for a while to defend it by military means. We'd only just come back to it when starvation began to strangle us. Then they thought of NEP, a scientific method — the defence of the revolution by economic means. They let the capitalist in just a little to defeat him naturally, and therefore in earnest and for a long time to come. The old tricks — grab him by the scruff of the neck, and up against the wall! — have got to stop. Work better than him, make more than him, sell cheaper than him, and then he'll break down and weep for shame himself, and will see who's beaten whom without any propaganda. Vladimir Ilyich, perhaps I got something wrong? You're smiling...

*Lenin.* No, you've got nothing wrong, on the contrary...

*Butuzov.* Then I go on to the main thing: the plan for socialism. Now even a fool can see that if there's industry, then there's the working class, metal for the countryside. The more metal there is in the countryside, the more socialism there is there. If the peasant pulls on the harness alone, and on his own little plot, he's small, but a capitalist; if he unites with his neighbour himself, of his own free will, then socialism is knocking at the door. If he not only learns to write his own name, but also "brings Belinsky and Gogol home from the bazaar", then metal in the village will never become a pile of rusty iron. The one follows from the other, and flows into the third. Altogether its scientific name is: the round of Marxism in Russia.

*Lenin (laughing).* But why didn't Karlych weep for shame?

*Butuzov.* That's the whole point. He put me a question: had I read the socialist Thomas More or, for example, the French writer Emile Zola, and in particular the novel *Money*? At the time I hadn't read the authors he named, and I admitted it. If, says Karlych, you're opposed to the coercion of the working man and opposed to militarised labour, then give us the answer to the question which worried the founder of utopian socialism, citizen More, and all his followers. And



before a huge number of assembled people he reads one place in the book which says ... if everything in society is held in common, how is a surplus of products to be obtained if each avoids work because he is not compelled to it by the hope for personal profit, while on the other hand, reliance on the labour of others enables him to be idle?

*Lenin.* Well, amazingly interesting! And what did you say?

*Butuzov.* I was silent for a long time, and then asked for a month. To prepare my answer. It expires tomorrow.

*Lenin (eagerly).* And what happened after?

*Butuzov.* To begin with I collected all the books I could get hold of. I even bought a copy of Adam Smith. *Enquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, in three volumes, St. Petersburg, eighteen hundred and sixty-six. And, of course, I read them all — More and Zola and Fourier and Marx and Engels, and looked at your works as well. I can honestly say, Vladimir Ilyich, that it was not an easy question — one might even say it was a teaser.

*Lenin.* You might indeed! How many people have racked their brains over it, and will do so in the future!

*Butuzov (lowering his voice).* Comrade Lenin, all the socialists who worked before us agree that the problem will be solved by competition. But what it is, and how you set about it — they don't say. They wrote that it was clear, and now go and check, when there's none of them left, whether it really was clear or not. Now why are you laughing again?

*Lenin.* It's amusing, and so I'm laughing. Perhaps I'm laughing for joy? You arrange a treat for me, and then forbid me to laugh... The strange thing is that I was also working on this problem literally a month after October, and even wrote an article on it — "How to Organise Competition"...

*Butuzov.* Haven't come across it.

*Lenin.* I never finished it... Here, take a look. Perhaps it will help you to answer Karlych. It seems to me that people should be stimulated to work under socialism not by coercion, not by the stick, but by the desire to be in the lead, encouraged by the corresponding material and moral rewards.

*Butuzov.* And how is it to be organised?

*Lenin.* I don't know. But the task is clear: we need that competition, not in ferocious but human forms, should work considerably better than rivalry. And how to achieve this? Well, let's ask the workers, let them rack their brains over the problem. I can assure you they'll find an

answer which we in our offices would never even dream of... Just give them the chance...

*Butuzov.* Not everyone will be happy to have the chance. There are those who prefer to let somebody else decide.

*Lenin.* Well, we shan't pay them any heed. Nor those who take any word on faith provided it comes from somebody in high office, nor those who can speak against their conscience... We'll ask people like you and Yan Karlovich... And when every worker begins to look for the answers to the questions that worry him in Adam Smith and Karl Marx, I think that then the problem of incentives to work will simply cease to exist.

*Butuzov.* And what about socialism? Can we do it alone?

*Lenin.* Certainly! Certainly we can, if we don't play the fool and don't listen to the theoretical exercises of the People's Commissar for Military Affairs. But if we do listen, we won't be building socialism. We'll be trying to force world revolution, militarising the country and getting involved in adventures abroad. We'll forget completely what democracy is about.

*Butuzov.* He says he isn't against democracy.

*Lenin.* The party knows very well what those who favour tightening the screws mean by democracy. Their "democracy" sees the people as a silent herd in whose name people's lives are weighed and assessed. Tell Yan Karlovich that the path proposed by Trotsky is not the path of the Bolsheviks. Tell him that the Bolsheviks are far from being indifferent to the question of how socialism is to be built in Russia... *(He begins to cough.)*

*Butuzov.* Please don't concern yourself, Vladimir Ilyich... I shouldn't have talked about this speech of mine. And I even forgot to ask — how are you feeling?

*Lenin.* Worse than I would like.

*Butuzov.* Vladimir Ilyich... *(He is afraid to finish.)*

*Lenin (resolute and calm, as if speaking of something long since decided.)* There will still be the RCP and reliable comrades. I hope they'll see things through.

*Butuzov (a sudden lump in his throat).* Ilyich... Vladimir Ilyich... We'll hammer out everything you've planned ... everything you've planned... *(He embraces Lenin and, unable to say any more, quickly departs.)*

As if in response to that conversation, revolutionary Russia surges into action... Simple, basic equipment — wheelbarrows, carts, a couple of lorries, a small American tractor ... and the multi-

storeyed buildings of the Kashira and Volkhov power stations rise upwards, the windows of the peasant cottages, never illuminated before, begin to shine, a building site is cleared for a new factory, *peasants* deliver bread to the town, *railway workers* decorate with red calico a steam engine repaired after work, *elderly people* bend over alphabet books, and *an old man* writes on a blackboard: "We are not slaves, slaves aren't we". The Republic of Soviets is beginning its path into the future, and at the centre of it all stands *Lenin*, happy, his gaze fixed on tomorrow.

*Lenin (to Fotiyeva)*. Write! Write! (*He dictates.*) "Along with the expansion of the Central Committee, I consider it necessary to expand the Central Control Commission. I propose to the congress that it elect from seventy-five to a hundred — the figures being, of course, approximate — new members to the Central Control Commission from among workers and peasants. (*He strides up and down, thinking out loud.*) Yes ... seventy-five to a hundred progressive, informed workers and peasants who will take not a single word on faith ... say not a single word against their conscience ... will not fear to admit any difficulty ... will not fear any struggle for the sake of an important goal... (*He dictates.*) They should constitute a united group which, 'without respect of persons', will ensure that no one man's authority, be he the general secretary or any other member of the Central Committee, can prevent them making an enquiry, checking documents and obtaining, in general, unconditional information and rigorous correctness in all affairs..."

*Fotiyeva (interrupting)*. That's enough, Vladimir Ilyich! Enough! Our time has run out!

*Lenin*. Just another couple of minutes.

*Fotiyeva*. This morning we stole several extra minutes, and this time the nurse didn't even want to let me in.

*Lenin*. Oh, very well, but we can talk, can't we?

*Fotiyeva*. What about?

*Lenin*. About anything except politics, of course.

*Fotiyeva*. If it's not about politics...

*Lenin*. You're wearing a new blouse ... it suits you...

*Fotiyeva*. Thank you.

*Lenin*. How much did you pay for it? And how much did a blouse like that cost last year?

*Fotiyeva*. Oh, Vladimir Ilyich, such little matters aren't worth talking about...

*Lenin*. These little matters, Lydia Aleksandrovna, are called the stabilisation of the rouble. Little matters such as

the fact that yesterday Kashira began to operate at full capacity.

*Fotiyeva.* How do you know that?

*Lenin (continuing in buoyant tone)* ... and yesterday the Donbas produced seven extra train loads of coal.

*Fotiyeva.* But how do you know?

*Lenin (continuing)* ... and the harvest is such a good one that yesterday the Politbureau was able to adopt a resolution on supplying bread to students and teachers...

*Fotiyeva.* Vladimir Ilyich...

*Lenin (continuing)* ... and Corporal Orlik-Gorlik the Second solemnly declared in Paris that he is ceasing battle with the Bolsheviks as that is simply to spit against the wind. All that is precisely those little matters which enable us to say that we have already pulled socialism through into everyday life.

*Fotiyeva.* You've seen a newspaper!

*Lenin.* Yes, one called in and chatted for half an hour. She seemed quite nice, and I don't mind admitting I was quite captivated and wouldn't mind seeing her again, and more than once: appetite comes with eating. Can you be of help in such a worthy cause?

*Fotiyeva.* That was probably Volodicheva...

*Lenin.* Delicate hints about something known to no one...

*Fotiyeva.* I'm very glad you're in such a good mood.

*Lenin (to Fotiyeva, himself and us, with spirit).* Today we have everything we need for full socialism: control of the means of production in the hands of the state, state power in the hands of the proletariat, an alliance between this proletariat and millions of small and very small peasants, an alliance guided by the proletariat... (*He waxes enthusiastic.*) So what is the matter? Where is socialism? What is the matter is that between us and socialism there lies the chasm of insufficient civilisation and semi-Asiatic lack of culture. Full socialism requires not the present philistine and not the present level of labour productivity, although it is precisely these people who will build socialism and themselves... We need that level of civilisation ... such a profound cultural revolution...

*Fotiyeva.* Just a minute, Vladimir Ilyich, I can't keep up...

But Lenin is no longer listening to her; before him stands an official from the People's Commissariat for Nationalities. We shall call him *Orlov*.



*Lenin.* What is it? Has something happened in Tiflis?

*Orlov.* Sergo ... struck a nationalist ... in the face...

*Lenin (his voice flat).* So, it's true...

*Orlov.* Well, the Georgians are ... a hot-tempered people...

*Lenin.* But Segro was representing Moscow, the Central Committee in Georgia! He was expected to display justice, not his fists! What will people say? That the old tsarist policy is continuing under the cover of the name "communism"? What mud we've landed in...

*Orlov.* Very well, let's say Sergo is guilty, that he failed to restrain himself. But do you know what and whom he was fighting with when he exploded? Do you realise that when people mad with hunger fled from the Volga region<sup>8</sup> to Georgia, a group of Georgian social-nationalists, as Comrade Stalin quite correctly termed them, led by Budu Mdivani, introduced a law on the closure of the borders and shamelessly cordoned off the frontiers in front of the wretched refugees? Do you realise that now a Georgian woman who marries a Russian, an Armenian, in short, anyone from another nationality, automatically loses Georgian citizenship? Do you realise that this group is constantly trying, by hook or by crook, to abolish the Federation of Trans-Caucasian Republics — Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaidzhan — which you proposed? And why don't they like the Federation? Because in this Federation Georgia has lost that privileged position which it enjoyed by virtue of its geography. So oppose the Federation and Sergo, who leads the Federation, and is fighting this separatism and social-nationalism. And when, in reply to your attempts to stop this madness, you are personally insulted to your face...

*Lenin.* Sergo does not need to be defended from me. I have been one of his friends since we were emigres ... without people like him there would have been no party and no revolution... Therefore... And at the moment we are talking not about the party's battle against local nationalism, but about the methods used in that battle... I explained, I asked, asked that to each nation a proletarian attitude be adopted in the matter — mildness, caution, discretion, flexibility — none of which excludes a principled stand!

*Orlov.* Please sit down. Why put such a strain on yourself?

*Lenin.* Comrade Orlov, you are one of the leading members of the People's Commissariat for Nationalities...

*Orlov.* What kind of leader am I? I was taken away from my lathe and thrown in at the deep end!



*Lenin.* Have you ever thought of the dangers of great-power chauvinism in a country like ours?

*Orlov.* Stalin is always warning us against it. Great-Russian chauvinism, he says, is shapeless, faceless, and gets into the ears and eyes drop by drop, so changing drop by drop the entire spirit of some of our officials that you risk not recognising them.

*Lenin.* Well said! There's no denying the accuracy of Stalin's analysis, but nonetheless our aim is not only to explain the world but also to change it. How? How? That's the point. Today's affair with Sergo is a product of this whole business of "autonomisation". (*He sits down and falls silent.*)

The masses are set in motion.

*Bolshevik.* The Commission of the Central Committee requests your opinion on Stalin's project, which provides for the independent Soviet Republics of the Ukraine, Byelorussia, Azerbaidzhan, Georgia and Armenia to join the RSFSR as autonomous republics; all the central institutions of the above-named republics will henceforth be subordinate to the supreme organs of power of the RSFSR.

*Lenin (exploding).* So, so all our republics have to abandon the independence given them by the revolution? Is that it?

*Armenian Communist.* Armenia agrees with the project.

*Azerbaidzhan Communist.* Azerbaidzhan agrees.

*Georgian Communist.* Georgia is of the opinion that the project is premature. We believe it necessary to unite our economic efforts within a common policy, but retain all the attributes of independence.

*Byelorussian Communist.* Byelorussia is in favour of maintaining the existing position — each republic has its own agreement on alliance with the RSFSR.

*Ukrainian Communist.* The Ukraine has not debated the project, but assumes that the RCP adopts the viewpoint of recognising the independence of the Ukrainian Republic.

*Bolshevik.* Therefore the commission of the Central Committee confirms the project of Comrade Stalin and is passing it on to a plenum of the Party Central Committee for a decision to be taken. The proposal that the project be discussed in party cells in each republic has been rejected.

*Lenin (furious).* This is unheard-of! Three republics out of five are opposed, but the commission of the Central

Committee nonetheless confirms the project! And it does not wish to hear the opinion of Communists in the republics? It makes no sense at all! I want to have another talk with Stalin. Put me in touch with Frunze, Narimanov, Mikho Tskhakaya and Kirov. All the world is watching us, particularly the waking East: so how? How will the Bolsheviks move from words to deeds, how will they create their state? Convince, explain, appeal to awareness, reason, win trust, wait patiently until the people themselves say: "Yes, that's what we want!" — or will we coerce, push, compel people where voluntary action is required? There must be no joining of the RSFSR on the basis of autonomy, but uniting with the RSFSR in a Union of Soviet Republics... We see ourselves as co-equals with the other republics, together with them and equal to them... Together and equal — that's the point! — we will enter a new union, a new federation — the Union of Soviet Republics... I request that all the members of the Politbureau be acquainted with my project, discuss it and take their decision.

*First Bolshevik (to second Bolshevik).* Ilyich is preparing to go into battle in defence of independence.

*Second Bolshevik.* In my opinion we will have to be firm in opposing Ilyich. This is typical "national" liberalism.

*First Bolshevik.* It's simply a clarification of certain points in Stalin's project.

*Lenin.* No, this is not "national" liberalism at all! Nor is it a clarification of certain points in Stalin's project... It is something fundamentally different! Quite different! I am deeply guilty before the workers of Russia that because of my accursed illness I almost let such a vital issue slip me by! I declare war to the death on Great-Russian chauvinism! (*He turns to Orlov, agitated.*) Yes, yes, this whole affair of "autonomisation" is fundamentally mistaken and inopportune.

*Orlov.* Please sit down, I beg you...

*Lenin (pacing up and down his study).* A fatal role here has been played by Stalin's haste and love of administrative solutions, as well as by his animosity towards the notorious "social-nationalism". Animosity plays a very negative role in politics in general, and all the more so in the nationalities question... Extreme care, extreme prudence, extreme compliance!

*Orlov (interrupting him).* If you don't sit down at once, I'll leave without asking your permission!

*Lenin.* "Workers of all countries, unite!" — unite, not depending on national affiliation. That's the class approach, which requires tact and wisdom! From the noble to the ridiculous is just a step!

*Orlov.* I'll leave, I swear it, I'm on my way this minute if you don't sit down.

*Lenin (taking a seat).* I remember from my childhood how strangers were treated in the Volga region where I lived: any Pole was termed a "Polyachishka", if it was a Tatar, then he was inevitably called "prince". A Ukrainian, of course, was a "Khokhol", a Finn — a "Chukhna", and a Georgian or any other Caucasian — a "Capkaz" man ... The strangers in our midst had to endure endless coercion and insult... And so now, if we want to create an atmosphere of trust, it's not enough to declare formal equality, not enough to abolish legal inequality — we must put an end to practical inequality... Do you agree?

*Orlov.* Of course I agree, of course, but...

*Lenin.* What an infinitely complex question, with dozens of the most diverse aspects to it, and by no means the least important factor is the cultural, the conceptual maturity of the individual and society. Marx habitually tested the thinking of socialists he knew using the nationalities' question. He called it "feeling the sore tooth". After a talk with Marx, some comrades had gaps in their mouths. Perhaps we should check our teeth more often?

*Orlov.* Oh! You do confront us with tasks!

*Lenin.* We've now begun to build the Union of Soviet Republics; the plenum of the Central Committee has unanimously adopted the formula "*together and equally*", but that's only the beginning. Do you realise how much has to be done to ensure that the nationalities' question never arises again as it has now? Take Kazakhstan and Central Asia — colonies with almost one hundred per cent illiteracy. That's today. And tomorrow? A development such as human history has never known. And how? Above all thanks to the heroic effort of the Russian people, the Russian working class, which will give to the provinces its factories, people, resources.

*Orlov.* And what will be left for us?

*Lenin.* It would seem that you, too, have problems with your teeth, Comrade Orlov. We will yet prove and prove again that the Great-Russian people are capable of giving mankind the most noble examples of genuine brotherhood.

What is chauvinism, nationalism, if not, in fact, poverty of the mind, cultural poverty, whatever fine-sounding words are used to hide it. We are, ideally, in favour of the fusion of nations, in favour of the elimination of national barriers, and one day this will happen because your nationality is a matter of total indifference to communism. Until that day we have to work and work, but any journey begins with the first step. Why are you looking depressed? You can consider yourself as having got off lightly. If you'd had to talk with Marx, you'd have had no teeth left at all!

*Orlov disappears, and Lenin already sees Volodicheva in front of him.*

*(To Volodicheva.)* I would like to add something to my letter to the congress. Take a note, please... *(He dictates.)* "Stalin is too rude, and this fault, perfectly tolerable amongst ourselves, and in dealings among us Communists, becomes intolerable in the one occupying the post of General Secretary. Therefore I propose that comrades discuss the question of removing Stalin from this post and appointing another man who, in every other respect, differs from Comrade Stalin only by virtue of one advantage — he is more tolerant, more loyal, more polite and more considerate of other comrades, less capricious, etc. This factor may seem an insignificant trifle. However, I think that from the point of view of preventing a split, and from the point of view I described earlier concerning relations between Stalin and Trotsky, it is not a trifle, or it is a trifle which may acquire decisive significance. Lenin." *(He falls silent, collecting his thoughts.)* Yes, that's it... *(To Volodicheva.)* Now take an envelope from my desk and put the letter inside it... That's right. Write on the envelope... *(He dictates.)* "To be opened only by Lenin and, after his death, by Nadezhda Konstantinovna."

*Volodicheva.* I won't.

*Lenin.* What won't you?

*Volodicheva.* I won't write "after his death". It's a letter to the congress, and the congress is in four months' time — what right do you have to think of death?

*Lenin (with a smile).* I don't — but the thought comes all by itself... My illness is such that anything can happen ... one has to be ready for everything...

*Volodicheva.* I won't listen to such talk!

*Lenin.* What can be done about it, Mashenka? Believe



me, I don't find it easy to talk like this... Let's treat it as we would any other work.

*Volodicheva.* You're a perfectly young man, fifty-two years old—that's all! You fell ill, and you'll get better, get better a thousand times over!

*Lenin (laughing).* Once would be quite sufficient... Well, that's enough squabbling. Write down: " ...and after his death, by Nadezhda Konstantinovna..."

*Volodicheva.* I won't.

*Lenin (realising that indeed she will not write it).* Very well... Put the document in the envelope and lock it in the top drawer of my desk. And put my red file with everything I've dictated there with it. That's it... (*He takes the key from Volodicheva.*) When the time comes, when I feel the moment has arrived, I'll give it to Nadezhda Konstantinovna myself...

*Volodicheva.* But it's too early now, isn't it?

*Lenin.* Yes, of course it is...

Pause.

*Volodicheva.* Vladimir Ilyich... Vladimir Ilyich... Are you going to dictate anything else?

*Lenin.* What? Ah... yes... No, I'm finding it rather difficult today, for some reason ... more difficult than usual... Let's take a break for a moment... Is Sergo better?

*Volodicheva.* Yes, he's planning to go home.

*Lenin.* He'd do better not to hurry before he's really back on his feet—know him only too well... And how is Frunze feeling?

*Volodicheva.* Everything's fine again.

*Lenin.* He has a clear head. He's doing wonders in Kiev. There's an example of a revolutionary with outstanding moral authority not because he occupies a high post in the party but just the opposite—he occupies such a post because of his authority. Yakov Mikhailovich also possessed such authority. What's the weather like outside? Frosty again?

*Volodicheva.* And how!

*Lenin.* How? (*He laughs.*) Well, that's something which doesn't upset me in the slightest.

*Volodicheva (uncertainly).* No? I'm already confused... What I may say, what I may not... There's nothing political in it, is there?

*Lenin.* In frost? An enormous amount of politics.



*Volodicheva*. Nineteen degrees below. Are you going to have a rest, Vladimir Ilyich?

*Lenin* (nodding). "Frost and sunshine, a wonderful day, but you are still sleeping, my lovely one. It's time, fair maid, awake..."<sup>9</sup>

*Khariton* and *Shpilka* appear with a chess-board and a violin. *Volodicheva* leaves.

*Khariton*. Rest! Rest! Not a word about politics!

*Shpilka*. Whoever breaks the rule has to pay a million.

*Lenin* (waving his hand). Agreed. It's a long time since I held a chess piece...

*Shpilka* plays on the violin. *Khariton* bends over the chess-board.

*Khariton* (singing). "And so we begin!"

*Shpilka*. That's one million. An allusion to the trade union discussion.

*Lenin*. Yes, that's right, a million. If it's to be without politics, let's keep it that way. It's a long time since I held a chess piece...

*Khariton* (getting out the money). "Oh, freedom, grant me freedom!"

*Shpilka*. Another million. A demand for a free vote.

*Lenin*. Yes, it seems you'll have to...

*Khariton*. Et tu, Brute?

*Shpilka*. More political allusions?

*Lenin*. There, checkmate to Kollontai.<sup>10</sup>

*Khariton*. And we'll take cover behind Shlyapnikov...

*Shpilka* (in melancholy tones). That's a million from each of you.

*Khariton*. They didn't call him *Shpilka* for nothing... (*He takes out the money and sings.*) "Santa Lucia"...

*Shpilka*. An allusion to the Genoa Conference. Pay up.

*Lenin*. Excuse me, but that is a Neapolitan song and the conference was in Genoa. A million from you for lack of objectivity.

*Shpilka*. I protest! The song is Italian, and the conference was in Italy.

*Khariton*. Pay up the million. There are two of us—an absolute majority.

*Lenin*. No, while *Shpilka* is sawing across his box, we'll end up down the drain! Let's have our favourite instead.

*Khariton*. With the text that's poorish?

*Shpilka*. What's that—an allusion to Kollontai's pamphlet? *Khariton* (*singing*). "I threw open the window—couldn't breathe the close air... (*He goes down on one knee.*) In my face wafted lilacs' sweet scent..."

Lenin, however, is no longer listening to them. He is recalling a day in March, nineteen nineteen. Before him stands *a girl in a white coat*.

*Nurse*. Vladimir Ilyich, you asked to be warned...

*Lenin*. What? Is it bad?

*Nurse*. Very bad.

Lenin gets up from his seat, crosses the entire stage to the wings on the left, the nurse running after him. *Two doctors* come out towards him.

*First doctor*. Vladimir Ilyich, you mustn't come in here, you may be infected.

*Lenin*. That doesn't matter now.

*Second doctor*. It's influenza, Spanish influenza. It's bringing people down like flies... If you catch it, we won't be able to help you... You don't have the right to take the risk.

*Lenin*. I won't catch it.

*First doctor*. I can't let you go in... It's already difficult to do anything to help Yakov Mikhailovich...

*Lenin*. Is he conscious?

*Second doctor*. He recovers consciousness for literally just a minute or two, and then again...

*Lenin*. All the more reason. He'll see me...

*First doctor*. You can't take the risk! I won't let you go in!

*Second doctor*. Forgive us, but you're making it necessary... It's a dreadful and infectious illness...

*The doctors* hold Lenin back by force.

*First doctor*. Be reasonable!

*Lenin*. What does that mean? What are you talking about? He's a friend of mine... He's departing as he lived... It's my duty to be beside him... (*He speaks sharply.*) I know what I'm doing! (*With a powerful movement of the shoulders he shrugs off the doctors trying to restrain him and goes to the bed.*)

A man is lying on the bed, hidden by pillows and a blanket, his arm hanging down lifelessly. We cannot see his face, but from time to time the hand clenches into a fist. Lenin brings a chair up to the bed, sits down, gently takes hold of the hand and begins to stroke it affectionately. The nurse stands behind him.

*Lenin.* Yakov Mikhailovich ... my dear man... You are my oldest and most reliable comrade... I seem to have known you for a thousand years, but we only met in the spring of nineteen seventeen ... such a short time, yet it seems so long... We have never spoken about it. I was the happiest of men... I never had to worry about the rear, about my back... I always knew that you were there... And I won't say everything I feel now ... how much the revolution owes to you ... if it were possible, all our comrades would be here ... they're over there, by the door ... we all love you very much... Yes, yes, it's me... I can hear you, yes, yes, a new generation is growing up... Of course, of course, you'll be back. We'll go away together somewhere, for a holiday! Yes, that's it—for a holiday! We'll take some time off—about thirty days or so! What—too much? Oh, alright, about five, then—and off to the Volga. Now about that? Agreed? We'll go to Nizhny, and you can show me around...

The hand falls, lifeless.

(*Not noticing.*) Or we could take a boat and sail to an island: we'll just relax and not say a word about politics. How long do you think we'll hold out? Well, I'll promise ten minutes...

*Nurse.* Vladimir Ilyich, he can no longer hear you.

At that moment violins express pain and grief, the stage darkens, red banners with black bands are lowered, and a high voice declaims "You fell a victim..." Revolutionary Russia bows its head and takes its leave of a hero of October. *Lenin* steps forward, stands in a beam of light, tries to speak, but cannot swallow the lump in his throat. Behind him *people* stand in serried ranks.

*Lenin.* We have great need of leaders. In the course of their struggle, great revolutions bring forth great men and foster talents which previously appeared impossible. We have given the people the opportunity to determine their destiny themselves, and everyone has seen how, from the depths of the people, have come those into whose hands we do not fear to place the cause of our whole life. We have only just be-

gun—it is they who will have to continue and to face problems which even seventy Marxes could not answer. May they be helped by the memory of a man who was always the symbol of revolutionary dedication to duty, the memory of a proletarian leader who united about him the most diverse people and was able to help each of them to give of his best, his most effective, to the Revolution. There is no greater sorrow than that of accompanying friends to their final resting place. The only thing which comforts is the knowledge that, though we pass on, the revolution remains. Farewell, Yakov Mikhailovich. Goodbye, my friend!

The last chords of the funeral march fade away, *the people* begin to disperse, and *Lenin*, deep in thought, his hat in his hand, walks across the stage as if across the Kremlin courtyard, listening to his own thoughts, to his own inner music, and he returns unhurriedly to his study on that spring day in nineteen twenty-two. *Glyasser* is waiting for him.

*Lenin*: Is there anything from Genoa? There's a press conference there today.

*Glyasser*. Nothing so far. If there is, I'll bring it immediately. Are you worried?

*Lenin*. Everything has been strictly agreed, of course, with Georgy Vasilyevich,<sup>11</sup> but... This is our first serious move abroad.

*Glyasser*. If you yourself had gone...

*Lenin*. No. I can assure you of that—no. I am nonetheless a dilettante, but Chicherin is an expert, a professional. And we've sent a pretty strong group over there. Vorovsky, Rudzutak, Krasin, Litvinov and, of course, Georgy Vasilyevich himself ... the brightest minds, fine comrades, dedicated Bolsheviks... Take any of them ... Leonid Borisovich, for example ... what erudition, what an amazing ability to draw people to him ... he would be the head of the cabinet in any European country. And just look who they have in support, and not only in Chicherin's Commissariat. No, Europe is poorer in talented people than we are, definitely...

Genoa and the press conference given by *the Soviet* delegation appear before *Lenin's* inner eye.

*Diplomat*. In the name of the Soviet delegation which has come to Genoa, I am ready to answer any questions from the gentlemen reporters.

*Journalist. New York Times.* Minister, the Genoa Conference is the first appearance by the Soviets on the international arena. What have you brought with you to Genoa?

*Lenin.* Our three principles: peaceful parallel coexistence, universal reduction of arms, and the extension of the rules of war to include a prohibition on its more barbaric forms.

*Diplomat.* The relations between the two camps which oppose each other are the basis of all international life. We propose that these relations be built on the basis of the principle of peaceful parallel coexistence, universal reduction of arms, and the extension of the rules of war to include a prohibition on its more barbaric forms, involving the destruction of the civilian population.

*Woman reporter. The Observer.* But how can this be reconciled with the fact that you are preparing to impose your system on other countries at the point of a bayonet?

*Diplomat.* To impose is to perpetrate a crime. We shall defend socialism with bayonets, but that is a quite different matter.

*Lenin (unable to restrain himself).* Bravo! We are Communists, and we preach what Marx and Engels bequeathed us: "The victorious proletariat cannot impose happiness on any other people without thereby undermining its own victory." We shall nonetheless assist our class brothers, but that can no more be called "exporting revolution" than some transatlantic merchant can be called a Bolshevik simply because he is prepared to trade with red Russia.

*Journalist. Il Messagero.* Minister, if I have understood you correctly, you are proposing to forbid war and violence as a method of deciding relations among peoples?

*Diplomat.* Yes, that is the meaning of parallel coexistence. However, revolution cannot be forbidden, the people cannot be forbidden to overthrow a tyrant, the working man cannot be forbidden to fight for human conditions of work... And to see the hand of Moscow in every revolutionary explosion— isn't that to deceive oneself?

*Journalist.* Whether it's the hand of Moscow or the spirit of Moscow makes no difference.

*Diplomat.* For us it does make a difference whether it is the people themselves who have achieved freedom, of whether they were forced in the name of freedom.

*Journalist.* Minister, I would like to interrupt...

*Diplomat.* One moment... Does it not seem to you, gentlemen, that you are being frightened not by the hand of



Moscow, not by the red military threat, although you also shout about it, but simply by the thought: "And what if the Bolsheviks manage to achieve what they are planning in their country?"

*Journalist.* Minister, I am obliged to stop you...

*Diplomat.* One moment... Is not that why your extremists are placing their hopes on another trial of strength? And therefore the word "Bolshevik" must frighten children! Then your hands will be free! Isn't that the case?

*Journalist.* Minister, you are not at home but at a press conference. It is we who put the questions and you who answer them.

*Diplomat.* You may take my questions as being the answers.

*Journalist.* *The Times*, London. How is your talk of peace, of the power of example on the international arena, to be reconciled with the rule of violence inside your country? When will the terror end? When will the death penalty be abolished?

*Diplomat.* I can give no better reply than to quote the words of a famous Frenchman: "Let the gentlemen murderers first abolish the death penalty." There is no one in the world who desires an end to terror as much as we do. It requires only very little: that we should no longer be murdered—by bullets, by words, by corruption, by bribery. Nineteen twenty-two is, of course, not nineteen eighteen. We have become strong enough to exercise clemency with increasing frequency. However, let no one in future think we are fools. No attempt to strike us by word or deed, to undermine us by corruption or bribery, will go unanswered. I repeat—it will not go unanswered.

*Journalist.* *Paris le Soir*. Whom do you prefer—Lloyd George or Clemenceau? With whom do you prefer to have dealings?

*Diplomat.* We are not indifferent, of course, to whether we are dealing with those who lean towards military solutions or those who incline to pacifism. We will give every support to the pacifists, we will make concessions to the pacifists...

*Lenin.* We will trade with pacifists to such an extent that the militarist will howl!

*Diplomat (finishing).* ... and we will trade with the pacifists to such an extent that the militarist will howl!

Genoa disappears, and in front of *Lenin* there appears a young and elegantly dressed American, *Armand Hammer*.

*Hammer.* Mr. Lenin, I hope this little present will give you a little happiness... (*He gives Lenin a statuette.*) Notice, the little monkey is looking at a human skull, and sitting on the book 'On The Origin of Species' by Darwin.

*Lenin.* And what does this allegory mean?

*Hammer.* When I bought it in England, I thought that the little monkey was pondering on the evolution of the human species.

*Lenin.* An amusing little thing. Thank you for the present. How is your Russian progressing?

*Hammer.* I have my own secret method: a hundred words a day and talking to anyone I can. I even made a speech in Russian to the workers in the Urals. They understood everything and deafened me with applause. I kept on bowing to them for ages, but they began applauding me again. I went out to bow again, but again the noise began. I was very happy to have such an effect on the Russian working mass. I went out to bow again, but then I was told they'd already had enough.

*Lenin.* Why?

*Hammer.* They wanted the interpretation, not me. They thought my Russian was genuine English.

*Lenin (laughing).* Well, that can always be put right... If only someone in your own country wouldn't think your English was Russian, and didn't try to make you not want to engage in trade with Russia.

*Hammer.* Business is business, but Russia is love. The Bible says: "In the beginning was the Word..."

*Lenin (with a smile).* We'll correct that to read: "In the beginning was an asbestos mine in Alapayevsk." By the way, how are things going there? Sometimes people try to feed me with nice little fairy-tales.

*Hammer.* Things were bad. There was a food shortage and people were dying of hunger. There were disturbances. However, it was not lack of bread which caused the food shortage.

*Lenin.* What do you mean?

*Hammer.* I sent two trainloads of grain from Petrograd, but for some reason they got lost. I found them fifty miles from Yekaterinburg, on the sidings of a small station. They'd been standing there for more than a month. The commandant said: "You're a businessman, give me five hundred poods of grain, half a waggonload, and your train will be on its way." Meanwhile in Alapayevsk people were dying of starvation.

*Lenin.* We have three enemies: communist conceit, illiteracy and bribery. (*Harshly.*) I am in favour of the firing squad in such matters.

*Hammer.* In the Urals they were of the same opinion.

*Lenin.* And back in your home country they'll inevitably write: "Yet another innocent victim of Bolshevik terror."

*Hammer.* Each plays his own game. I'm no politician, I'm a businessman. I want to trade. I try to persuade everyone to trade with you. Some are afraid, others don't want to. When I began to talk on the subject with Ford, he wouldn't let me speak. He said that although the Russian market is enormous and undoubtedly offers wonderful opportunities for his automobiles, he, Henry Ford, wasn't going to send so much as a screw until power in Russia passed to those with an ideology more to his liking, or until the Russians made considerable concessions in this area. "Let them alter their laws," he said. Mr. Ford, I said, if you're going to wait for a change of power in Russia before trading, I'm afraid you'll never trade with them at all.

*Lenin (laughing).* Even Chicherin couldn't have put it better!

*Hammer.* Mr. Lenin, I'm no politician, I'm a businessman... But I'll tell you straight: it was very difficult to argue with Mr. Ford. He put it like this: "Hammer, why do you think I'm a madman. Why should I help my grave-diggers?"

*Lenin.* Ford has read the *Communist Manifesto*? I should apologise for not thinking better of him.

*Hammer.* Mr. Lenin, I said ... if you'd heard what I said, you might have gone ahead and appointed me, if not in Chicherin's place, then at least as his right hand... But to give Mr. Ford his due, I must say that towards the end of our talk, economics had begun to oust ideology.

*Lenin.* Even before the revolution we knew that we would win, and that we would somehow have to arrange our relations with the world of capital...

*Hammer (interrupting eagerly).* Somehow? It's simple! Make money! Together! We make ours, and you make yours!

*Lenin (smiling).* You think so?

*Hammer.* I assure you. It's a fascinating occupation! You make a million out of thin air! What could be more interesting, Mr. Lenin? Don't you agree?

*Lenin.* It may be, it may be, Mr. Hammer. So, we should trade?

*Hammer.* Of course!

*Lenin.* And let the two systems compete—yours and ours. (*He throws two piles of books onto the desk*). There's yours, and here's ours.

*Hammer* (*gaily*). O. K. I'm not worried about mine!

*Lenin* (*smiling*). Neither am I about mine!

*Hammer* (*tossing a few books from one pile onto the other mischievously*). We'll sell you machinery, tractors, technology, inventions...

*Lenin* (*tossing the same number of books back*). And we'll sell you raw materials, pelts, gold, asbestos...

*Hammer.* And we'll sell you locomotives!

*Lenin.* And we'll sell you timber! For the moment—timber.

*Hammer.* O. K. I'm happy with my share.

*Lenin.* And I'm happy with mine.

*Hammer.* Now we're talking about the real thing! We need each other.

*Lenin.* Indeed we do! And let the world, if you don't object, watch us and draw the conclusions.

*Hammer.* O. K. That's honest. Everyone's free to make his own choice.

*Lenin.* Precisely—each makes his own choice.

*Hammer.* Mr. Lenin, I've really taken a liking to you. You're an amazing idealist and romantic!

*Lenin.* Why was I so enthusiastic about our little game: you sell us locomotives, and we'll sell you timber? Because today the struggle has moved into that area. Only the way of life, and the standard of life will finally answer the question—socialism or capitalism. If we solve the economic problems, then we shall certainly have won the final victory. That's why we don't need war, that's why we're so eager to disarm! If you like, disarmament is the ideal of socialism! We could spend those millions on the economy. There are so many things we lack! There's something in it for you as well—you could buy from us a thousand times more than at present. Isn't that so?

*Hammer.* If we could only do it... I wasn't kidding when I said that in Russia you can make millions out of thin air. But in the West they're afraid that you'll deceive them.

*Lenin.* And I can't help asking whether we're not being stripped deliberately. After all, there are those who benefit if we take those billions out of the economy, away from the people. There are those who don't want us to be able to

tackle our real tasks. So you have a mad paradox: we dream of peace, but we are obliged, compelled to be prepared for war. Tell them all: we have no alternative save that of parallel peaceful existence! Trade, the exchange of cultural values—what marvellous possibilities! Cultural achievements belong to the whole of mankind. Shakespeare and Leonardo da Vinci belong to the Russians just as Pushkin and Tolstoy belong to the English and the Italians. Do governments have the right to deprive their own and other peoples of these sources of reason and good? Therefore blockades, isolation, both economic and cultural, are unnatural, and finally become a boomerang...

*Hammer.* Mr. Lenin, have I upset you?

*Lenin.* For every Bolshevik there are three sacred words: peace, bread and freedom. Without the first two, the third is a fiction. Therefore among the million problems, two are for me the most important: bread and peace. For me each day begins and ends with these. Do you know what the duty is today of honest leaders of the peoples? Not to allow our natural and inevitable rivalry to cross that dividing line, beyond which (*He takes the statuette.*) a monkey will gaze in amazement at a human skull, not knowing what it is or where it came from. That's how I understand this allegory.

*Hammer* disappears, and *Lenin* has already moved to a cold January day in nineteen twenty-three. *Volodicheva* comes hurrying in.

*Volodicheva.* Vladimir Ilyich, congratulations! Today's *Pravda* is carrying your article—"Better Fewer, But Better!" It's come out very well!

*Lenin.* Very well? And why should I believe you just on your word?

*Volodicheva.* But I haven't got a copy.

*Lenin.* Just a glance... Just at my article... You have my word!

*Volodicheva.* Oh, I'll be in trouble for this! (*She takes a newspaper out of her file and hands it to Lenin.*)

*Lenin* (*looking through the newspaper*). Indeed, it has come out well... Very well... Here... and here... Oho! Well done: in nineteen twenty we were trading with seven countries, and now there are already twenty-eight!



*Volodicheva.* Vladimir Ilyich, your article isn't there.

*Lenin.* You can have it back ... just a brief glance ... things in Baku... (*Satisfied.*) Another five oil-derricks have come into operation—very good indeed! (*He returns the newspaper.*) And now, Mashenka, let's go over our work... (*He opens a red file which contains the manuscripts of articles he has dictated.*) Here they are, our dictations, our little dictations... We've completed our programme... Just one word on the nationalities' question...

*Volodicheva (ironically).* One...

*Lenin.* And another on the plan for building socialism... Industrialisation, cooperation, the cultural revolution—all just one word each... As for the reply to Sukhanov—two and a half... I put that well! What do you think—will that be enough for a book, a very small booklet?

*Volodicheva.* More than enough!

*Lenin (smiling).* And a book, Mashenka, as one very intelligent and pleasant fellow reminded me, is the spiritual legacy of one generation to another, the instructions given by the watchman going off duty to the watchman coming to take his place... Do you agree?

*Volodicheva.* Well, in general...

*Lenin (laughing).* And in the particular as well, believe me... Now take this file and hide it in the top drawer of my desk and lock it. (*He takes the key from Volodicheva.*) Thank you. (*Suddenly.*) And what else is there in the newspaper? They say Martov is also dying.

*Volodicheva.* I am forbidden to discuss that.

*Lenin.* But perhaps you've read about it?

*Volodicheva.* I'm forbidden to discuss it.

*Lenin.* I mean the newspaper. Have you read it?

*Volodicheva (after a long silence.)* Yes.

*Lenin.* Yes... "How short our lives, how much we've lived through..."<sup>12</sup> (*After a pause.*) Do you remember? He wrote once: "There are only two communists in Russia — Lenin and Kollontai"... (*He laughs.*) Lenin and Kollontai... And in Geneva he published an article in which he said I'm politically dead. It has a wonderfully witty subtitle: "In place of an epitaph"... In exile, when he was still with us, he wrote "The Hymn of the Modern Russian Socialist", a brilliant parody, as it finally turned out, on himself, and published it under the pseudonym Narcissus Tuporylov... (*He gives a youthful laugh, and then suddenly begins to sing.*)

*Over our heads thunderclouds grimly lower,  
Dark forces batter us, clout after clout,  
Our slavish backs are with bloody welts covered,  
Furiously lashed by the barbarous knout.*

*Rubbing our sinful bodies a time or two  
We will give the matter a practical view.  
Knouts will wear out, folks, so be of good cheer—  
You will be free in a few hundred years.*

*Slowly but surely, shyly, demurely,  
Advance working class! Just be sure and advance.*

*Volodicheva (smiling and joining in).*

*Slowly but surely, shyly, demurely,  
Advance working class! Just be sure and advance.*

Both laugh happily.

*Lenin.* Well written, devil take it. And well thought-up... Narcissus Tuporylov. It's a pity he wasn't with us, a great pity... What an amazing comrade, what an honest man! What intelligence! Ah... (*Gloomily*). Yet the result of the political activity of this intelligent and honest man can only be the vilest and bloodiest rule of the bourgeoisie, up to and including monarchy...

This thought returns Lenin to the anxious spring of nineteen twenty-one, when the 10th Party Congress was to open in Moscow. A fine-looking, middle-aged woman appears, dressed in black. We shall call her *Varvara Mikhailovna*.

*Varvara Mikhailovna.* So, Vladimir Ilyich, the congress is tomorrow?

*Lenin.* How are you planning to vote?

*Varvara Mikhailovna.* Against. Against you, unfortunately. I've brought you a warm scarf from Petrograd. Nadya asked me.

*Lenin.* There's no need. It would only seem hypocritical. If I break off relations politically, I do so personally. Forgive me.

*There is a short silence.*

*Varvara Mikhailovna.* After that I ought to leave, of course, but you know I won't... You and I have been through too many things together, and I want to say once again... I simply must warn you ... on my own behalf and that of many of your comrades in the "workers' opposition" now ... warn you against haste, against one-sidedness, against errors, if you will...

*Lenin.* Warn me, then, Varvara Mikhailovna.

*Varvara Mikhailovna.* We all know how you love the voice of the working masses. I've just come back from Petrograd, where I spoke at the Metallurgical Factory with theses of the "workers' opposition"... We won support for our platform. Here's the resolution... (*She hands it to him.*) An eloquent document...

*Lenin (looking through the resolution).* Yes, indeed... How many years did you work at the factory before the revolution?

*Varvara Mikhailovna.* Almost ten. Ah, I see... You think that the support was because I'm one of them there? But when I looked around me, I saw only new faces, not a soul I knew.

*Lenin.* That's why they supported you. (*In reply to the look of incomprehension.*) Petrograd is denuded. The dearest thing we possessed there, the flower of the Petrograd proletariat, was almost entirely lost during the Civil War. Only a handful remain. The void had to be filled. The peasants came, with Sukharevka in their hearts. Don't you think that's reason enough for these sentiments? Do you think they're not reaching us? How many young Bolsheviks do we have who know absolutely nothing about theory? How many who have simply jumped on the bandwagon? Don't you think that's reason enough? How many stupid mistakes have we ourselves made? And bureaucracy? And hunger and cold? And dislocation? And the demobbed soldiers whose profession is to kill, and to whom we can offer neither this nor any other work. Don't you think that's reason enough for oppositional sentiments? But when adult men and women of sound mind sow theoretical cockle, water it, hoe it...

*Varvara Mikhailovna.* There's no smoke without fire, Vladimir Ilyich.

*Lenin.* Inasmuch as the "workers' opposition" is raising a number of sensible demands, for example, wants to battle against bureaucracy not just in word but also in deed, we shall do everything we can to bring us closer together.

More than that, if we did not take as much as we could in the sense of democracy from the sentiments being expressed by your rank-and-file comrades, we would face political collapse. However, we shall do that, and therefore everything healthy, genuinely proletarian in the "workers' opposition" will follow us, will help to restore the trust in us which has been undermined by minor bureaucratic mistakes. As for what is unhealthy, anarchic, petty-bourgeois, that which constitutes the basis of the demands being made by the leaders of the "workers' opposition"...

*Varvara Mikhailovna.* What are you referring to?

*Lenin.* The economy, industry, is to be run by the trade unions: the party, the state are not to interfere. Is that right?

*Varvara Mikhailovna.* Yes — you deal with the politics, and we deal with the economics.

*Lenin.* But politics is concentrated economics. Even a child knows that! How can they be separated? And why bring the party and the trade unions into head-on collision? The party is something special that requires conscientious people prepared to sacrifice themselves. The party makes mistakes and the party corrects them. The party guides and selects people who have talent and who know the path which still lies before us, the obstacles we still have to overcome. The party does not deceive the workers. But the trade unions accept everyone, both those in whom we take pride, and those who, instead of working, make cigarette lighters, who steal factory equipment, who sell food from the countryside on the black market, who repeat and pass on non-proletarian slogans, whom the people rightly call fleecers. Are they also to run the economy?

*Varvara Mikhailovna.* You simply do not want to let the working class have access to the levers of state power!

*Lenin.* I dream of it. However, does every worker today already know how to manage the state? With our poverty, illiteracy, lack of culture? Pipe-dreams!

*Varvara Mikhailovna.* You yourself always said that socialism is the liberation of the forces of labour. A bureaucratic system does not liberate but, on the contrary, hobbles those forces. By cutting the worker off from the management of the economy, it turns him once again into a hired worker, only hired not by a private employer but the state, a slave who has no interest in anything except how to do as little as possible and receive as much as possible. Was it not you who said that

if the creative initiative of the masses were allowed to flow freely, the cause of socialism would be secured.

*Lenin.* Yes! That is one pole; government by the party and the state is the other. Close the circle of democratic centralism and you will get a social current such as the world has never seen. If we violate the correct combination of centralism and democracy, we shall have you and Shlyapnikov<sup>13</sup> — anarchy without centralism, or Trotsky — centralism without democracy. And how do we formulate the question? The party, the vanguard of the class, guides the mass of workers, educating and preparing that mass. Therefore for us the trade unions are a school, a school of administration, of management, of communism — preparing the mass of the workers, and then the peasants, too, so that they will be able to take into their hands the management of the entire national economy. But it's not study first, and then management — it's study in the process of management! It's a policy for decades, it's a programme. Between the magnitude of the task and our present poverty, material and cultural, there is a huge gulf. If we are clever, we shall jump across it, if we follow Shlyapnikov and Kollontai, we shall break our necks. That's one side of your platform, and the other — and here is the total break with communism — the party, it would seem, is not necessary in your view, comrades ... you want to push the party aside!

*Varvara Mikhailovna.* That's not true!

*Lenin.* Oh, yes it is! You're keeping something back, but your platform implies that there is no need for the party. In place of the party — trade unions. Or else the party and the trade unions as equals, and not together but in opposition to each other.

*Varvara Mikhailovna.* We are leaving the party the general ideological control but, of course, demanding that the trade unions be given actual independence.

*Lenin.* If we grant actual independence, then where is the general ideological control? Playing with words, abracadabra! Either the party is one with the trade unions in pursuit of common goals, and then they cannot but be politically bound to each other, or else freedom, independence — but from what? From the goals? From their common interests? And then what do we have in fact? We deny the leading role of the party, create some new, third force, become a magnet for all the discontented, fight, of course, for worker power,



only, please, without Communists. And, of course, without communism!

*Varvara Mikhailovna.* I sense what you are leading up to...

*Lenin.* Not me. Life is leading you there, the logic of factional struggle. A sign of the times: today no one — neither the Socialist-Revolutionaries, the Mensheviks nor the White Guards — speaks out against the power of the workers, against the Soviets. Just one thing — please, without Communists! The party sticks in your gullet, all of you!

*Varvara Mikhailovna.* Please, Vladimir Ilyich, remember it's a woman you're talking to!

*Lenin.* Let's have none of that, you're a political figure. And when the "workers' opposition" comes forth with its platform to the thunder of White Guard applause, then we all have something to think about — the party and Shlyapnikov and Kollontai and you, Varvara Mikhailovna.

*Varvara Mikhailovna.* Well, you can't say that about Bukharin.

*Lenin.* Nikolai Ivanovich... Instead of putting out the fire of trade union debate, he's pouring petrol onto it and shouting: "I'm the chief fire-officer!" Nikolai Ivanovich's mildness — and that is one of the qualities for which everyone loves him and cannot but love him — knows no bounds. They even call him jokingly "soft wax". But I have read what is being written on that soft wax, and almost crossed myself! On the one hand, Trotsky is right, on the other — Lenin. True, one must give Nikolai Ivanovich his due: in his opinion it was Trotsky who was right in the end. And why? Because this country, so he supposes, requires a strong, powerful hand to emerge from the ruins, requires a leader capable of tightening the screws? But this country doesn't need a master, it needs each working man to feel himself the master and indeed to be the master! Perhaps he is right when he says that man is a lazy animal, that he will not work without orders and the stick, and therefore, if the worker is to go to work and actually work, he must be presented with a choice between the possibility of difficulties, and the inevitability of harsh repression? For the moment I merely quote... Perhaps he is right when he insists on the adoption of a Table of Disciplinary Penalties for the trade unions which happily includes everything from a reprimand to imprisonment for thirty days and forced labour from one to six months?

*Varvara Mikhailovna.* Clearly he is assuming that the economy can only be developed on this basis.

*Lenin.* On this basis one can only divide the party and the people. Even before the revolution I said: anyone who wishes to advance towards socialism along any path other than political democracy will inevitably arrive at the most inappropriate and reactionary conclusions both in economics and in politics.

*Varvara Mikhailovna.* You doubt the sincerity of Trotsky?

*Lenin.* Do you think it will matter to people whether they are to be used as building material on the basis of sincerity or some theory?

*Varvara Mikhailovna.* Vladimir Ilyich, I don't recognise you.

*Lenin.* Why... I'm a human being, Varvara Mikhailovna... Do you know why I threw myself unconditionally into this fight? Here the argument is about what we are building — a military-administrative state, a barracks under the name of "socialism", or a society in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all... Here the argument is about the relationship between the party and the working class, the party and the masses. Here the argument is about the methods of leadership: which is right — to convince or to compel? What is the correlation? Where to convince, and where to compel? Coerce and bend people where free will is required, or take them along with you by the force of reason and example? If we use force now, what will the repercussions be later? What does he who sows the wind reap? What has been said about this before? Always at the same point... And yet this question is a litmus test which immediately tells you who you have in front of you — a Bolshevik or ... well, I'd better not say... If you build socialism and completely forget about the democratic organisation of society, tighten the screws... then, of course, then everything is possible... then the peasantry is not an ally of the working class, but a hostile force which must be kept constantly on a tight lead... then the masses must never, under any circumstances, be raised to participation in management, yet that, and only that, is the guarantee of the complete victory of the revolution ... then the party will replace the class, Trotsky — the party, or, more accurately, he does not need the party because it would tie his hands ... in place of the party he will need a corrupt hierarchy, through which he will send down his orders

from Olympus... And what about the people? *Die erste Kolonne marchiert rechts! Die zweite Kolonne marchiert links! Stehen! Liegen! Arbeiten!* And after work they all cry in chorus: "Long live Trotsky!" And then, of course, he will need that table of penalties tightened up a dozen, a thousand times!

*Varvara Mikhailovna.* Vladimir Ilyich, what are you getting so furious about?

*Lenin.* Was it for this that the working class shed so much blood and accepted so much suffering? Such a system can only please a lackey, a nobody who can evoke nothing but hatred and contempt! And you ask that I stay calm?! That I don't lose my temper? And there are those who hope that at some point I will give way on this?

*Varvara Mikhailovna (admiringly).* You're a fiery man, Vladimir Ilyich, but we do not intend to give way either.

*Lenin.* In that case, where are we heading? Are we to set up our factions, tear the party apart? (*With pain.*) What are you doing, my dear Varvara Mikhailovna... If you don't get a hold on yourself in time, you'll roll down the slippery slope of increasing ruthlessness and won't be able to stop... Don't do it... I mean it quite sincerely, don't do it... Better, go and take a look at Kashira and see what we're managing to achieve, and all your doubts will disappear...

*Varvara Mikhailovna.* We'll let the congress decide.

The *presidium* of the congress appears. Lenin steps to the front of the stage.

*Lenin.* We have lived through an exceptional year, we have permitted ourselves the truly amazing luxury of discussion and argument in unbelievably difficult circumstances, when petty-bourgeois anarchy was trying to seize us by the throat. Our enemies, and their name is legion, repeat and spread the hundred-mouthed, thousand-mouthed rumour: if the Bolsheviks are debating, that means argument, and if argument, that means divisions, and if divisions, that means the Communists have weakened: put on the pressure, choose the right moment, take them by the throat! Our task, therefore, after duly listening to all points of view, all nuances of opinion, even nuances of nuances, is to take everything that is necessary and useful, reject everything that is harmful

and unnecessary — our task is to come out of our debates and arguments stronger and more united, without the slightest trace of factionalism, proving the truth of the proverb: "It's darkest before the dawn". Unfortunately, we had rather a lot of darkness and rather little light. Nonetheless there was light: in this struggle to determine the path to follow, the methods and means to use, the party could not but learn something. The political lesson to be learned from the present moment is adhesion, party unity; the economic lesson — not to be content with what has already been achieved, to seek new ways, try and test the new.

Yes, today we are inadequate. Yet the first steam engine, when it was invented, was also rather poor, and no one even knew whether it would go. Now, however, we have steam engines. The proletariat is not afraid to admit that in the revolution some things went very well, and some things failed. All the revolutionary parties which have perished up to today perished because they gave themselves airs, were unable to see in what lay their strength and feared to speak of their weaknesses. But we shall not perish, because we are not afraid to speak of our weaknesses and learn to overcome them. We are the first to tread this path, and that cannot but leave its mark. The main thing is not to err, to determine correctly the path to follow, the methods and means of achieving our aim. For a party which is surrounded by the most powerful and mighty enemies, which is carrying on its shoulders an unprecedented burden, this is indeed the most important thing. No one can compromise the Communists if the Communists do not compromise themselves. No one can prevent the victory of the Communists if the Communists do not prevent it themselves. We have found the right path! We must not turn off it! We must not turn off it! Thus shall we conquer!

*Chairman.* Comrade delegates, we shall now move on to a roll-call vote on the resolution proposed by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin.

The voting begins. There are numerous cries of "for!", "for!", "for", the few exclamations "against!" are drowned out in the roar of voices voting in favour of Lenin's policy. Those supporting Vladimir Ilyich surround him, those who voted "against" go up to Varvara Mikhailovna. This is Lenin's final recollection in the play, its apotheosis — Lenin, and behind him a mighty wall of Bolsheviks. The clock strikes six times. The walls of the study reappear, but the cries of "for!", "for!", "for!" can still be heard, becoming

fainter till they fade into silence. Lenin slowly returns to the eighteenth of October, nineteen twenty-three. He is in his study, which he entered fifteen minutes earlier. He sighs deeply and goes up to his desk, opens a drawer and takes out an envelope marked "Letter to the Congress" and a red file with his last works. Once again he touches the desk, the revolving bookcases, the armchair, moves towards the door, stops... He takes a last look at his study, a final farewell... He notices us... He steps to the front of the stage, gazes at us for some time with obvious interest — his look is demanding and interrogating... Then an encouraging smile appears on his lips... That is how we shall remember him.

*1981*



# Onwards...Onwards... Onwards!



THE AUTHOR'S VERSION OF THE EVENTS  
OF 24 OCTOBER 1917  
AND CONSIDERABLY LATER



*Dedicated to those who took  
part in the October Revolution*

## PART ONE

*We wish to talk to those who, in October 1917, and considerably later were at the forefront of History, albeit on opposite sides of the barricades.*

*We wish to offer them the opportunity to talk to us.*

*We wish to see ourselves in the mirror of the Revolution, and see the Revolution in each day we have lived.*

*Has the voice of the Revolution — pure and powerful — always rung out loud and clear? When and why did it become muffled, barely audible? How did we let it happen? And how did we manage, despite this, to achieve what we have achieved?*

*We wish to question the past so as to move forward, this time leaving nothing hidden behind us.*

*Today we shall listen to...*

KORNILOV, SVERDLOV, STRUVE, SPIRIDONOVA, MARKOV, KERENSKY, TROTSKY, STALIN, PLEKHANOV, ORDZHONIKIDZE, LUKOMSKY, DZERZHINSKY, ZINOVIEV, KAMENEV, MARTOV, DENIKIN, DAN, KRUPSKAYA, BUKHARIN, FOFANOVA, RAKHYA, LENIN, and also ROSA LUXEMBURG and COLONEL POLKOVNIKOV

The curtain rises. Twenty-two chairs are set out in a semicircle. They will be occupied by the characters as they come out onto the stage. One after the other they appear:

*Kornilov.* In that year of disorder and general collapse caused by the drivelling liberals, I, General Lavr Kornilov, turned my troops on Petrograd in order to drive the herd

back into the pen, but failed as a result of the treachery of Kerensky. I hereby declare: I feel no regret, I reproach myself not for marching out to attack, but for softness and insufficient resolution in seeing it through. On 24 October 1917, I was in Bykhov, in the girls' high school, which had been turned into a prison for the best generals in the Russian army — my comrades-in-arms in the attack.

*Sverdlov.* Yakov Sverdlov, Bolshevik. I died in the second year of the revolution by a ridiculous chance — influenza... I was thirty-four years old... On 24 October, I was in the Smolny. As far as I remember, I did not go anywhere that day, although I was eager to go to Serdobolskaya, to Fofanova's apartment, where we were keeping Vladimir Ilyich in hiding. The Central Committee lacked a common point of view on the uprising, yet the seconds were ticking away.

*Struve.* Pyotr Bernardovich Struve, philosopher, economist, born in the same year as Ulyanov the younger. In my youth I strayed into Marxism, collaborated with Lenin, and had the pleasure of sharing a meal with him on more than one occasion. My stepmother Kalmykova was an ardent admirer of Lenin, and he used to dine with us. I even gave five roubles, perhaps more, to support his *Iskra*. I sobered up in 1905. For me, Bolshevisia is a mixture of Russian gut-rot with slop from Karl Marx. I helped Kornilov, Denikin and Wrangel. After that, living abroad, I helped those who were with me. I equally disliked both Kerensky and Miliukov.

I died a sad death in Paris in 1944 — Stalin had struck the Germans, and it seemed there was no hope left. Some of our people accepted him; what difference, they said, how the Tsar of all the Russias styles himself — general secretary or whatever. He has expanded the empire, recovered lost territories and is winning the war. Russia is becoming the second power in the world... I don't believe in revamped Bolshevisia.

On 24 October, when it was still possible to turn things around, I explained, pleaded, persuaded in Petrograd, but no one would listen. The bell was tolling for them, but they did not hear it.

*Spiridonova.* Maria Spiridonova, member of the Central Committee of the left Socialist-Revolutionaries, a member of the aristocracy by birth. I joined the revolutionary movement as a young woman of twenty-two, in 1906, shot at a tsarist satrap, was seized by gendarmes and raped. I experienced prisons and exile. Both before and after the October

Revolution I supported collaboration with the Bolsheviks and the sharing of state power with them. We were divided by the Brest peace treaty, although to begin with I personally agreed with Lenin. On 6 July 1918, I led an uprising by our party against the Bolsheviks. I was arrested, sentenced to one year's probation, and then granted an amnesty. The years from 1921 to 1937 were an unbroken chain of arrests and exile, although I had ceased all political activity and was working as an accountant. I was arrested for the last time in Ufa. They accused me of planning an attack on the government of Bashkiria. Then, however, when the whole of that government found itself in cells next to mine only a few days later, the charge was changed to planning the assassination of Voroshilov should he suddenly think of coming to Ufa.

After noting how the cells filled up, with whom and on what charges, I realised that an anti-Soviet coup had taken place. I refused to testify at Bukharin's trial that our July uprising was the result of a conspiracy with him. Kamkov and Karelin, my colleagues on the Central Committee, broke down and did give such testimony in court. In 1941, a few hours before the Germans arrived in Orel, I was shot, together with the Bolshevik Khristian Rakovsky.

On 24 October 1917, I was in Petrograd, in the Smolny, helping on the Revolutionary Military Committee, which included our party and the Bolsheviks.

*Markov.* Markov, Sergei Leonidovich, lieutenant-general, chief-of-staff of the South-Western front. I was arrested and sent to Bykhov. Following the victory of the Jewish-Masonic conspiracy in Petrograd, I left for the Don, where I was in command of the 1st officers' regiment, and later of a division in the Volunteer Army. I was killed in 1918. I express my total agreement with everything said here by General Kornilov.

*Kerensky.* I, Alexander Fyodorovich Kerensky, would like to speak to you from the height of my eighty-nine years of life. Alas! I celebrated that anniversary completely alone. In 1970, none of those who took part in the excesses of that October remained, save for myself in New York and Molotov in Moscow.

I outlived Lenin by fifty years, and saw with my own eyes the consequences for Russia of that funeral, which he organised, for the February Revolution, for that February democracy which I then embodied for the people. Yes,



yes, I was the embodiment of the hopes and aspirations which the Russian people linked with democracy. If you wish, the February Revolution was victorious only because I was in Petrograd and Lenin was not, and it was defeated... (*He turns to Kornilov.*) It was defeated because Kornilov... that puppet in the hands of irresponsible industrial circles, a commonplace army general whom I had raised so high ... saw himself as the saviour of Russia. He was the one who criminally destroyed the united front of the army and the authorities against Bolshevism... I say this with bitter sincerity.

*Kornilov (interrupting him).* As sincerely as in September 1917 (*he reads from an old newspaper*): "I never doubted Kornilov's love for his country. Not ill will but paucity of knowledge and political experience lie behind his actions, which threaten the state with considerable disorders. He should be executed, but when that happens, I shall go to his grave, place flowers upon it and bend the knee before a Russian patriot."

*Struve.* What do you expect of a ninety-year old in his dotage? He knows nothing, and confuses what he does know.

*Sverdlov.* On the conscience of that democrat...

*Kerensky (heatedly).* Who are you to talk of democracy! You began by dispersing the Constituent Assembly, and how did you end? In 1970 you expelled Alexander Trifonovich Tvardovsky from the journal *Novy Mir*! Yet another sign of the flowering of your democracy?

*Sverdlov.* I don't understand. What is the relevance of that?

*Kerensky.* I mean that I carefully followed life in Russia right up to my last breath, and I know everything. If you think I am ill-informed, you are mistaken! I followed everything! I am not General Kornilov, who had the contents of the press reported to him by his orderly, and even that not every day. In the Congress library I read and analysed everything, including the notes of Struve's friends, who sought to explain to the public why that gentleman always foamed at the mouth on hearing the name of Lenin — renegades indeed always hate and fear their own past.

*Struve.* He was always a poseur, and remains a poseur.

*Kerensky.* On 24 October 1917, I, Minister-Chairman, Supreme Commander-in-Chief, was, as usual, at my post in the Winter Palace, in the former study of Alexander III.

*Trotsky.* I am Bronstein, Lev Davidovich, party pseudonym — Trotsky, the son of probably the only Jewish land-

owner in Russia. In 1918 my father, having lost all his property, visited me in the Kremlin. In order to do that, he had had to travel the 200 kilometres from Kherson to Odessa on foot. He expressed everything he thought about me in just one phrase: "Fathers work their fingers to the bone to earn something for their old age, and then their children make revolutions..." I joined the revolutionary movement in 1896, at the age of seventeen. I took part in the Second Party Congress, joined the Mensheviks, then followed fifteen years of polemics with Lenin... In 1905 I was one of the leaders of the first Russian revolution and chairman of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' Deputies. I was arrested, tried and sentenced to exile for life in Siberia. I escaped and went abroad. In 1917, following the February Revolution, I returned, thinking I would have to learn from the revolution. However, there was clearly a lack of teachers, and I myself had to teach the revolution. In August I joined the Bolshevik party, and was elected a member of the Central Committee at the Sixth Congress. That autumn I again became the chairman of the Petrograd Soviet, and after the October Revolution — People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, for Military Affairs, and Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Committee of the Soviet Republic. There were indeed deep differences between myself and Lenin on fundamental questions of theory and policy, which later expressed themselves in his phrase about my "non-Bolshevism". There were also the most radical differences between myself and Stalin and the party, which later led to my expulsion from the country. Talk of my work abroad to set up the Fourth International in opposition to the Third is not an invention, it is all true, as is much else of that kind. I am a soldier of the World Revolution, and give myself without hesitation to the judgement of future generations.

The only thing which is not true and could never have been true, and which I reject with contempt — there was no spying, no contact with intelligence services, except for just one instance... (*After a pause.*)

On 20 August 1940, I was mortally wounded by a blow from a pick-axe on the back of the head delivered by one Jackson, the name used by a Spaniard called Ramon Mercader... The satanic desire for vengeance held its celebrations.

*Stalin.* Retribution is not vengeance, retribution is always

just. We, the Bolsheviks, always based ourselves on that moral category. As for our Spanish comrade, Ramon Mercader, his role was simple and clear: he executed the sentence passed by the proletarian court.

*Trotsky.* I was killed without even the semblance of a trial, Stalin!

*Stalin.* We do not intend to tie our hands with formal considerations, with bourgeois moral categories, when we are dealing with an unprincipled band of spies and murderers who have long since ceased to be a political current in the working class. (*To the audience.*) I have no need to introduce myself. Here the milestones along my path have not been forgotten, the most important of which was my victory in a war such as mankind had never known, I preserved Lenin's heritage and built socialism. I request that we proceed on that basis.

*Kerensky.* Generalissimo, on 7 November 1918, on the first anniversary of the October excesses, you wrote in the newspaper *Pravda* that "all work connected with the practical organisation of the uprising was carried out directly under the leadership of Comrade Trotsky, to whom the party is indebted first and foremost and above all". In 1924 you asserted that Trotsky had not and could not have played any role whatsoever in the October uprising. Then, in 1938, in the *Short History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)*, you declared that you, in effect, had been the leader of the uprising. Which is the truth, Generalissimo?

*Stalin.* The sooner the proletariat forgets some of the services rendered to it by this gentleman, the better.

*Plekhanov.* Plekhanov, Georgy Valentinovich... The whole of my life, to my last breath, was devoted to the Russian working class and the idea of socialism. 24 October... The eve of the most tragic day in my life, when Lenin led the workers into a political adventure. For one who had devoted his life to spreading Marxism in Russia, this was a catastrophe... I survived it by less than a year... I was only sixty-two years old...

*Ordzhonikidze.* Ordzhonikidze, Grigory Konstantinovich. A member of the party since 1903. In 1926 I became a candidate member, and then a full member of the Politbureau. A friend of Stalin. In 1922, when we were forming the USSR and I represented Moscow in Georgia, I foolishly lost my temper and struck a party comrade — the famous Georgian affair. Lenin suggested that I be expelled from

the party for two years so that no one should become a red-neck. Stalin saved me from punishment. The question which concerns me today is that of a Bolshevik's opposition to falsehood: where is that measure which would prevent us from stepping outside the framework of Bolshevism?

*Lukomsky.* Lukomsky, Alexander Sergeyevich, 1863-1936, lieutenant-general, an associate of General Kornilov, later an emigre. I fully support everything said here by Lavr Georgiyevich.

*Dzerzhinsky (speaking with a Polish accent).* Felix Dzerzhinsky, a Pole of aristocratic origin, joined the revolutionary movement in 1892.

The plenum of the Central Committee held on 20 July 1926 was my last. The doctors had warned me that I was categorically forbidden to deliver any speeches... However, Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev were so openly intent on wringing the neck of NEP that it was impossible to remain silent, to sit and do nothing... When I left the podium... I was shaking all over... And there you are ... three hours later it happened... I was forty-nine years old... If not in 1926, then in 1929, and if not in 1929, then together with the others... Why? Because I could not have borne any undermining of Lenin... It is with pain, dreadful pain, that I remember that last conversation on 14 December 1922, when I clumsily attempted to shield Sergo and Koba in the Georgian affair, and Lenin looked at me so sadly and understood everything. It was after that conversation that he became really ill, and he never returned to the Council of People's Commissars. I bear that burden on my shoulders.

*Zinoviev.* Zinoviev, Grigory Yevseyevich.

*Kamenev.* Kamenev, Lev Borisovich.

*Zinoviev.* Our lives are much more than the October episode. There were some things we do not have to regret today ... and some for which we feel painfully ashamed.

*Kamenev.* It is shameful and painful that we, colleagues of Vladimir Ilyich, destroyed not only ourselves but others by our admissions that we had links with the Gestapo ... were involved in the murder of Kirov ... wished to see the restoration of capitalism...

*Zinoviev.* Before the arrest we had, of course, the chance to escape from it all, but... On the evening of 1 December, after the murder of Kirov, meetings and demonstrations took place spontaneously all over the country... As a member of the board of the Centrosoyuz, I was supposed to deliver a

speech to all the personnel, but I was unable to speak, the words stuck in my throat... I was shaken, both because I knew Kirov well, and because I fully understood what awaited us...

*Kamenev.* However, the strength to take the only possible ... the only correct decision ... as Tomsy, Sergo, Gamarnik were to do later ... that was lacking.

*Zinoviev.* If we had done that, we ourselves would have signed our own verdict in the eyes of the people.

*Kamenev.* Yes, probably. But we would not have disgraced our own names... On 24 October I was in the Smolny and was actively involved in the events of that day. The error behind our opposition to the uprising was a thing of the past.

*Zinoviev.* On that day I was in hiding, writing for *Pravda*. The issue for 25 October contains my two articles — the lead article and one other.

*Martov.* I am that very Menshevik, Yuli Martov, whose name was used as a bogey-man in Soviet Russia. I was once a close friend of Lenin, one of few with whom he was on intimate terms... Yes... 24 October... The day before... Well, I was, of course, in Petrograd, and I did all I could to stop it happening, or, if it did happen, at least quite differently.

*Denikin.* Denikin, Anton Ivanovich, Lieutenant-General. Yes, yes, that same Denikin... In 1942, when Hitler was on the outskirts of Stalingrad, I contemptuously rejected a proposal to move to Germany. Krasnov went over to the Germans but I refused, because to the end of my days, to my death in 1947 in the United States, I never ceased to be a Russian patriot.

*Stalin.* I suspect that the Soviet people remember not that Denikin who coquettishly displays his refusal to fight against his own country, but that Denikin who was the hanging general, who shed the blood of Russian workers and peasants on Russian soil.

*Denikin.* I fought with them, unlike you, I fought. On 24 October, I was with General Kornilov in Bykhov, playing, if I remember correctly, billiards.

*Dan.* Dan, Fyodor Ilyich, Menshevik, doctor, a deputy to the Moscow Soviet until 1922, and then expelled from the country, I lived to see the victory of Russia in the Second World War. Like Miliukov, I welcomed Stalin, realised that Bolshevism, despite its serious inadequacies, had become a powerful factor in the realisation of the socialist idea. On 24 October, together with (*he gestures towards Martov*)



Yuli Osipovich, I did all I could to prevent 25 October going down in human history. Fortunately, I did not succeed.

*Krupskaya.* Krupskaya, Nadezhda Konstantinovna. In the party I worked in the sphere of education. The wife of Ulyanov. On 24 October I was sitting in the Vyborg District Committee room, where Fofanova brought Ilyich's notes, and I sent them on to the Smolny.

*Bukharin.* Bukharin, Nikolai Ivanovich, born in 1888 in Moscow, the son of a teacher. I joined the revolutionary movement at the age of seventeen. At the Sixth Congress I was elected to the Central Committee, of which I was a member right up to my arrest in 1937. Among the important landmarks in my political career, I feel I must mention the Brest episode, when I made a major political mistake. However, I accuse myself above all, both as a Bolshevik and as a man, for not having been able to prevent that "great change",<sup>1</sup> that "revolution from above" as it is called, which took place in our country in 1929.

*Stalin.* That is my formula, I do not intend to disown it.

*Fofanova.* Fofanova, Margarita Vasilyevna, landlady of the last apartment in which Vladimir Ilyich was in hiding. I saw with my own eyes how anxious he was — the cause to which he had devoted his life was being decided, and he was obliged to stay in my apartment. I know that some historians do not like me. I say how it really was, but they correct me because they know how it should have been.

*Rakhya.* Eino Rakhya, a Finn, a Bolshevik, shot in 1938 when I was corps commander. In 1917, on the orders of the party, I guarded Comrade Lenin. At the end of September I brought Ilyich from Vyborg to Petrograd. Stalin jumped on me: how had I dared to act without the permission of the Central Committee? And on the evening of the twenty-fourth, again without the permission of the Central Committee, I took Ilyich to the Smolny. I was guilty of no other "transgressions" against the party.

*Lenin.* Ulyanov-Lenin. Making a revolution is far more interesting than talking or writing about it. Therefore let us proceed.

Part of *Fofanova's* apartment is illuminated in stage, *Lenin* is hurriedly mounting the stairs which lead to it, followed by *Krupskaya*, *Fofanova* and *Rakhya*.

*Lenin (looking at the decorations).* A very good likeness...

(*Looks at the flowers.*) But there were no flowers. Where would you get flowers in Petrograd so late in the autumn? Have the stage designers been to visit a museum?

*Krupskaya.* This corner was full of newspaperers. I complained about it...

*Lenin.* You said I was slovenly.

*Fofanova.* Vladimir Ilyich, children are being accepted to the young Pioneer Organisation here.

*Lenin.* It's children who least need Potyomkin villages...<sup>2</sup> (*To the stage hands standing round the illuminated area.*) And not a white tablecloth but an ordinary oilcloth... (*The tablecloth is changed for an oilcloth.*) That's better. We're ready.

Part of the study of Alexander III in the Winter Palace is illumined, *Kerensky* is mounting the stairs which lead to it.

*Kerensky (to the stage hands).* On my desk I had the pen and ink-stand which had belonged to Nicholas II. And the flag of St. Andrew was here, in the corner. Although, no, in October I was no longer Minister for the Navy... (*To the stage hands.*) Here there ought to be something revolutionary. For example ... well, for example... In the Kremlin, Lenin's study looked like the office of a mediocre manager of a second-rate bank... I myself never saw it, but I am reliably informed on it... In fact we never met, although our lives crossed more than once... We were born on the same date — 22 April, although I was several years younger... In Simbirsk our fathers both worked in public education... I was six years old when Sasha Ulyanov was executed... My father was deeply upset and took to his bed. I remembered that day all my life. It was, in effect, that execution which decided me to join the revolutionary movement... Later my father helped the Ulyanovs on more than one occasion to surmount the difficulties which resulted from Sasha's execution... Vladimir was awarded a graduation medal ... and a reference to apply to enter university... My father, unlike me, thought a great deal of him... I've got it! I've got it! A red bow! A red bow! (*The stage hands bring a red bow and pin it to the front of Kerensky's frock-coat, and the dressers try to brush off dust only they can see.*) Don't do that! Don't do that! It will lose its air of democracy! That's right... that's right...

The light now illumines part of the room in the Smolny where the Bolshevik Central Committee held their meetings: tables, bentwood chairs, a few armchairs. The Bolsheviks are going up the stairs towards it. To begin with their conversation is rather strained.

*Dzerzhinsky.* Yes, that's it... It began here...

*Trotsky (to the stage hands).* There was a map of the city on the table, sent to us by Smilga.

*Bukharin.* Listen, who sat where? I've forgotten...

*Sverdlov.* What does that matter?

*Stalin.* It matters a great deal. I was sitting here, next to Lenin.

*Bukharin.* Koba, stop inventing. You never sat here, you were always smoking and so you always stood by the window or in the corner.

*Stalin.* I sat here, next to Lenin. You can't accuse me of having a poor memory, I always remember everything.

*Sverdlov.* In any case, Lenin, like Zinoviev, never came here before 25 October, and couldn't have—they were in hiding, and afterwards we moved to Ilyich's office.

*Bukharin.* Very well, you can sit here. But admit that you always stood by the window or in the corner.

*Stalin (obstinately).* I was always next to Lenin.

*Trotsky.* We've already read that in the *Short History*.

*Sverdlov.* We didn't have these differences then, calm down. (*He takes a final look at the decor.*) We're ready.

The light illumines part of the Bykhov prison: a classroom with a blackboard, in the middle of the room there are several armchairs and a billiard table. The generals are going up the stairs towards it and looking at the decor.

*Denikin.* What times they were... Some are gone, and others are far away.

*Lukomsky.* The artist's a gifted fellow. He's got it exactly.

*Markov (to the stage hands).* A bottle of cognac, but only Shustov...

*Kornilov.* That's everything. We're ready as well.

## FOFANOVA'S APARTMENT.

Ten minutes past midnight on 24 October 1917.

Fofanova has only just returned: there is a full shopping bag on the table, and a coat hurriedly thrown down, Lenin is sitting at the table looking at some papers she has brought him, Fofanova is pouring out some tea.

*Fofanova.* I was terribly worried about you, here on your own.

*Lenin.* I waited patiently. What's going on outside?

*Fofanova.* Everything's calm. (*She hands him a cup of tea.*)

*Lenin.* Thank you. Let's go over the route between here and the Smolny.

*Fofanova.* What for?

*Lenin.* Just in case. I come out of the entrance and turn...

*Fofanova.* You're not going out of this entrance anywhere without the permission of the Central Committee. And if that permission is given, you won't go alone, and not on foot.

*Lenin.* Of course not. But who knows what unforeseen circumstances might arise? Why not prepare ourselves in advance?

*Fofanova.* You won't go by yourself?

*Lenin.* Across the whole city, where I might be seized at any corner?

*Fofanova.* Very well... You go out of the entrance...

*Lenin.* And along Serdobolskaya as far as Bolshoi Sampsoniyevsky Avenue...

*Fofanova.* There's a little shop on the corner, a grocer's.

*Lenin.* There's a little shop on the corner, a grocer's... Is that where you spent the whole evening?

*Fofanova.* I don't remember there ever being such dreadful queues. And what did I buy? Nothing special at all. (*She tips the contents of her bag onto the table.*) A bag of sugar, a packet of salt, bread, and various other little things. And I payed exactly four times more for them than at the beginning of summer. If you'd heard what the people in the queue were saying.

*Lenin.* What?

*Fofanova.* They were so angry you could have started sharpening the knives. Someone had come from Tver, where the shelves are bare. You, he said, don't know how lucky you are. The tsar was overthrown because the people could take no more, but things have got even worse. What's happening, Vladimir Ilyich?

*Lenin.* I think this is the most critical moment of our revolution.

*Fofanova.* We've had enough critical moments already.

*Lenin.* None like the one now. Any revolution can be roughly represented as three basic camps, three trends...

(*He picks up the packet of salt.*) Here's one camp — back to before. Wholly or in part, but back to the old. Counter-revolution. Underlying it — hatred of the people. (*He picks up the bag of sugar.*) The second camp — repainting the façade, but not changing the essence of the old system. Marching on the spot, fear of decisive action. Underlying it — fear of the people. (*He picks up the loaf of bread.*) And the third camp — only forwards, only the complete destruction of the old system, reliance on the revolutionary initiative, the independent action of the masses, faith in the people. (*He stands up and walks round the table.*) Yes, these are the three forces, the three trends. Six months ago the revolution proclaimed three slogans: peace, bread and freedom. What has been achieved? Nothing. Freedom without peace and without bread is nothing except the freedom to die from hunger or a bullet, while retaining the freedom to pronounce any speeches you want — small comfort for ordinary people... So, not a single question of the February Revolution is resolved. Hence the collapse and the national crisis. We are told that the whole country can be rallied to resolve these tasks. Our conciliators feed themselves on this self-deception, this illusion, but look here — where is the basis for such unity? How will you unite these three camps? How will you harness Kornilov, Kerensky and ourselves to one waggon? (*He brings the salt and sugar together.*) Here there is the chance of a bloc: these are pulling backwards, while these are marching on the spot, and in a revolution, one step on the spot is three steps back... (*He glances sideways at the salt and sugar side by side.*) No, today the generals will not forgive Kerensky for turning away from them during the Kornilov rebellion... (*He separates the salt and the sugar.*) We must move into this crack before they decide to disregard yesterday's differences and reach an agreement. Now is the moment when we can take power bloodlessly, with the minimum losses, for the sake of peace, bread and freedom. Tomorrow the moment will have passed. (*He smiles.*) That's why I have to be at the Smolny. So, I go along Bolshoi Sampsoniyevsky Avenue as far as Pervy Murinsky Avenue. Right?

Fofanova. Right. You can go on the tram as far as Botkinskaya.

Lenin. No, I won't risk it... (*He looks at the packet of salt.*) I go along Liteiny and turn into Shpalernaya... (*Unable to restrain himself, he seizes hold of the packet of salt.*)



Today, of course, the generals are cursing the day they supported the February Revolution and are undoubtedly preparing a second Kornilov rebellion. And Kerensky? (*He picks up the bag of sugar.*) There are signs of a bloc between them, although the mechanism of unity probably hasn't been found yet...

*Fofanova.* What about Kerensky? He was and is no more, where is he? No one wants to hear about him now, everyone's tired of him.

*Lenin.* Revolution isn't repainting the façade! Bureaucratic reform games, and not one single genuinely revolutionary step to smash the old bureaucratic machine! You can't summon up the heroism and enthusiasm of the masses without making a decisive break with the past, while leaving the whole of the former apparatus of power intact, turning democracy into empty words. A gigantic, stagnant army of officials which is to carry through the reforms that undermine their own rule? Bring about a revolution with the help of those who hate it? Whose leg are you pulling, gentlemen, who do you take for a fool? To try to carry through revolutionary changes using such an apparatus is an unbelievable illusion, unbelievable self-deception, and deception of the people. Kerensky has proved it! No, he's not such a fool as to publicly preach the philosophy of marching on the spot. Wait a little, he says, till the situation improves, till the right moment comes. Why rush on ahead, why exasperate? Let's act reasonably, and so on. Meanwhile he makes more and more concessions, big and small, under pressure from the right, and the revolutionary energy of the people slowly but surely evaporates. And those on the right are no fools. Why should they rush ahead, charge forward, when they're getting what they want bit by bit each day? Here the revolution gave way a little, here a little more, and here even more still... And the fools on our side cry, "Hurrah! Victory!" seeing victory in the fact that the right does not swallow them up immediately.

*Fofanova.* What's to be done, Vladimir Ilyich?

*Lenin.* Go to the Smolny. Now, either we fold our arms and wait for the revolution to be strangled, or we force our way forwards.

*Fofanova.* An uprising?

*Lenin.* Yes, an uprising. Hunger won't wait, collapse won't wait, the peasants setting fire to estates and seizing the land won't wait. The war won't wait. The generals in Bykhov won't

wait. But our Central Committee wants to wait. That's why I have to go. So, Shpalernaya Street...

*Fofanova.* Vladimir Ilyich, look at the time...

*Lenin (smiling).* Devil take it, I can't seem to get as far as the Smolny, someone always prevents me — either the generals, or Kerensky, or else our own people... Good night, Margarita Vasilyevna — I'll sit and think about it a little longer.

## BYKHOV. Seventeen minutes past midnight

At the front of the stage appears part of the Bykhov prison and four generals. The rest attentively follow the "testimony" of the generals, ready to intervene at any moment; their behaviour is free and easy: they leave, return, smoke, etc. *Kornilov* and *Markov*, having taken off their jackets, begin to play billiards. *Lukomsky* is looking through a newspaper. *Denikin* is thinking out loud, a wine glass in his hand.

*Denikin.* They gave me a company. What did I begin with when I was a young officer and intellectual? I decided to prove that the soldier doesn't need to be ruled by the stick. The company was lazy and made little progress. I was removed. Sergeant-Major Stsepura, who was on re-enlisted service, brought the company out onto the parade ground, raised an eloquent fist and barked out, "You're not under Captain Denikin now. Understand?"

*Markov.* From two sides to the middle. It's all the result of emancipating the peasants.

*Lukomsky.* It came too late. If it had happened twenty years earlier, we would have been part of Europe a long time ago.

*Markov.* Add to that all the base work begun by the Decembrists and continued by Vissarion<sup>3</sup>... Herzen<sup>4</sup>... And all the Mikhailovskys<sup>5</sup>... Uspenskys<sup>6</sup>... Shchedrins<sup>7</sup> and Klyuchevskys<sup>8</sup> — who can estimate the damage they've done?

*Kornilov.* The third from the side into the corner. You can also add Berdichev<sup>9</sup> to the list. Wipe it from the face of the earth for all the trouble it's brought us, and let jungle grow in its place.

*Markov.* Why jungle? Thistles.

*Denikin.* Today the storm is overwhelming, and those who aren't a part of it are tossed about helplessly. I remember a train with a coach full of grey greatcoats,

and a man in the passageway — tall, thin, in a threadbare coat... It was unbearably stuffy, jostling and cursing on every side. Suddenly there was a hysterical exclamation: "Curse it! I used to think the sun shone out of the Russian soldier, and now I'd strangle them with my own hands if I could!" Odd, but no one touched him...

*Lukomsky.* Nonetheless, February opened up before Russia...

*Markov.* In February, Russia began her road to Golgotha... The eighth into my corner.

*Lukomsky.* Forgive me, Sergei Leonidovich, but I most certainly cannot agree with you! Do we really have such a short memory? Surely we haven't forgotten the mindlessness, the mediocrity — if not worse — of our revered monarch and his government? The breakdown in the food supply, the collapse of the transport system, the chaos in the factories — you and I both know that's not an invention by the socialists. Everyone could see the incompetence in domestic affairs, and as for the incompetence in military affairs, who was better placed than we were to notice it at every turn? Aren't the figures for the war to date — eight million Russians to four million Germans — enough to condemn the entire system? Two Russians for one German — even an idiot, forgive me, could achieve that! The Romanovs, under the shadow of Rasputin, were doomed, and February was a blessing for the country. It's not surprising that the whole of the intellectual top command were sympathetic to it. Remember Brusilov: "If I have to choose between Russia and the government, I prefer Russia." And Lavr Georgiyevich gave the February Revolution his wholehearted support.

*Kornilov.* Yes, I was captivated to start with.

*Lukomsky.* It's not our fault if the liberals have proved incapable of steering the ship and have driven it aground.

*Kornilov.* I'm still ashamed of having had the misfortune to agree and myself... personally... arrest Alexandra Fyodorovna... She met me with dignity... no tears, no flood of emotions... "I hope, General, that you understand our position. You yourself have been a prisoner..." Are we not going too far, gentlemen, in throwing mud at them?

*Denikin (to Lukomsky).* Well, Alexander Sergeye-  
vich, let's see what the February Revolution has  
achieved so far... The army is in a state of collapse,  
industry is in a state of collapse, no one wants to work,  
total lack of any sense of responsibility...

*Markov.* A country of conferences, meetings and  
speeches, and nothing to eat!

*Lukomsky.* There is no country in the world as free  
as ours today.

*Denikin.* Russia has proved unworthy of the freedom  
she has won.

*Lukomsky.* That's why we have protested.

*Markov.* Yes, we are here — and Kerensky is at the  
Winter Palace.

*Denikin (to Markov).* No one is guaranteed against  
treachery.

*Markov.* I warned you, I begged you not to believe  
that scoundrel!

*Denikin.* Our agreement with Kerensky was quite  
clear: we bring the cavalry corps out against Petro-  
grad to disperse the Soviets, and he...

*Kornilov (ironically).* Declares us traitors to the re-  
volution. No, no gentlemen, here we only have our-  
selves to blame. We've shown our hand, and the whole  
of that rabble, from the extreme left to the most mode-  
rate — have united. Now there's just one question  
facing us: to continue, or consider it all over and done  
with?

*Denikin.* The country is on the eve of collapse. Who  
will forgive us if we resign ourselves to it? Shall we  
ever forgive ourselves?

*Lukomsky.* I'm not interested in ideology, only in  
doing something practical. As for the dirty work, wring-  
ing Kerensky's neck, we'll leave that to the Bolshe-  
viks.

*Kornilov.* Now you've said it. Our boundless love for  
Russia bids us to remain at our posts and save the  
country from grubby hands. Tell Headquarters that  
the troops are not to intervene if the Bolsheviks make  
a move. We shan't repeat our mistakes. I don't play  
games. Let them devour each other — the extreme left  
the moderates, and vice versa.

*Kerensky (shouting).* Just listen! Just listen! You all  
heard! Stop the clock! I've always said precisely that!

They've admitted it! I was the tragic victim of a battle between two extremes — Lenin and Kornilov! (*Turning to the generals.*) They're the ones, they're the ones who ordered that I should receive no support when the Bolsheviks began their attack!

*Struve.* Idiot! How could you call Kornilov a traitor and destroy everything?

*Kerensky.* When they raised their hand against me, they raised it against democracy in Russia!

*Denikin.* Admit it, at least here, that you were always thinking not of Russia but yourself. So, they might have thrown you out of the Winter Palace, and Kornilov, say, would have sat there instead, but our country would have been saved. But you ran for help to the Bolsheviks, armed the workers, sent the country lurching to the left ... you put the noose round your own neck with your own hands, and here ... here you are lying shamelessly to defend yourself!

*Kerensky.* How dare you! Forgive me, but I cannot continue... I feel unwell... (*He falls silent.*)

*Bukharin.* As one of our great writers said: "Due to reciprocal blows, the hearing is closed." The generals, however, can continue...

*Lukomsky (continuing).* For us, the Bolshevisation, which has overturned Kerensky, presents no danger. Their triumph will only worsen the state of collapse and anarchy. We will ask you for just three weeks, no more, to eliminate the Bolsheviks.

*Kornilov.* We need an efficient military dictatorship which will ensure that the river returns within its banks. I don't play games... And if, unfortunately, we should have to burn half of Russia, and even drench two-thirds of it in blood ... we weren't the ones who determined the choice. Tomorrow morning prepare a detailed deployment plan. A toast, gentlemen! (*They all stand up.*)

*Markov.* Lord ... we'll hang the lot of them!

*Kerensky (to the generals.)* Gentlemen, don't you think your three weeks are proving rather too long?



## THE WINTER PALACE. 6.30 in the morning

*Colonel Polkovnikov enters Kerensky's office.*

*Polkovnikov.* Chief of the Petrograd Military District, Colonel Polkovnikov!

*Kerensky.* Good morning, Georgi Petrovich.

*Polkovnikov.* The night has passed peacefully. There has been no delivery of food supplies and we have only enough for less than two-thirds of the ration.

*Kerensky.* We'll talk of that later. What of the Bolsheviks?

*Polkovnikov.* If one disregards the rumours, we are in complete command of the situation.

*Kerensky.* And the refusal by some of the regiments to leave Petrograd for the front — is that a rumour?

*Polkovnikov.* The Bolshevik Revolutionary Military Committee<sup>10</sup> has ordered that your instructions are not to be obeyed without their sanction.

*Kerensky.* What? And you kept quiet about it? You tell me about heaven knows what...

*Polkovnikov.* I began negotiations with the Revolutionary Military Committee to cancel this absurd order. The very fact that the Bolsheviks agreed to negotiate is proof of their weakness.

*Kerensky.* But that's rebellion ... mutiny ... a challenge to which I must reply. (*He paces up and down his office, thinking out loud.*) I have made too many concessions... Yes, I could be accused of being weak and excessively patient, but no one will say I resorted to harsh measures before being faced with the threat of the collapse of the state... Yes, yes... I'm sorry I didn't die five months ago. I would have died still believing that we can govern our state without whips and sticks. Is Miliukov right, after all, and the free Russian state is a state of slaves in revolt? People have often told me I have too much faith and dream too much. They accuse us of being not power but slush... Well... I shall try to have less faith, less faith in man, in his spirit, in his conscience, in his reason. Let my heart be as stone, let the flowers wither and the dreams of the free man which everyone laughs at, despises and tramples underfoot. I'll trample on them as well! None of it shall come to pass. My God, how painful this moment is!

*Polkovnikov.* Why, Alexander Fyodorovich?

*Kerensky.* Because I know the force of human ignor-

ance — and not only of our lower classes but the whole of Russian society: they don't need freedom, they need the fist! They need the fist, not freedom! There is no way of reaching an agreement with the Bolsheviks, to delay the battle any longer is dangerous, we must take the Bolsheviks in an iron grip and force them to submit... Of course, if we didn't scruple to use the methods of the tsarist government, then we would be obliged to provoke the Bolsheviks into an armed uprising...

*Polkovnikov.* They won't. They're timing their move to coincide with tomorrow's congress of Soviets. The congress will adopt a resolution on the transition of power to them, and then they'll move into the attack...

*Kerensky.* I'd go down on my knees and pray if that would get them to move earlier, but unfortunately there's little hope. Well, let them wait... We, however, shall wait no longer ... we must forestall them, strike first and push them into making a move... I order the immediate closure of Bolshevik newspapers for calling for a revolt against the Provisional Government. And two extreme right newspapers, *Novaya Rus* and *Zhivoye Slovo*, to even the balance. Lenin — and I can sense that he is here, in Petrograd! — is to be found immediately, arrested and taken to Aleksandrov, the investigator in charge of special cases. Have prepared for this evening a detailed plan for an expedition to take the Smolny Institute. The troops of the Northern Front, which are due to arrive in Petrograd at any moment, will be under your command. As for the congress of Soviets... Your forces are sufficient to prevent them from meeting. See to it. (*Polkovnikov leaves.*) The die is cast, gentlemen!

## THE SMOLNY. 8.15 in the morning

*Sverdlov, Kamenev and Stalin are waiting for Trotsky to finish talking on the telephone.*

*Trotsky.* Confrontation is unavoidable, and it is happening because of the instructions to send the garrison to the front. This night has been a critical one and we had no sleep.

*Dzerzhinsky rushes in.*

*Dzerzhinsky.* Half an hour ago officer cadets closed down the printing press. *Rabochy Put* has not come out!

*Stalin.* We know.

*Trotsky.* I have it all in my head and my hands. We'll certainly let Vladimir Ilyich know. (*He puts down the receiver.*)

*Dzerzhinsky (agitated).* I'm telling you, the closure of the printing press is only the beginning! We don't have the right merely to retaliate! We must make use of it, we must arrest the government immediately — our armoured cars are at the Winter Palace — and then push on further.

*Trotsky.* Under no circumstances! The arrest of the Provisional Government is not and cannot be the task facing us today. To use our armoured cars for that would be a mistake, but as for getting the printing press back from the officer cadets and publishing *Rabochy Put*... Yes, that's what I'll now propose to the Central Committee, although I've already issued all the preliminary instructions.

*Kamenev.* Running too far too quickly is one of the most common errors of revolutionary parties.

*Dzerzhinsky.* And you're proposing once again that we lag behind? I'm tired of listening to it. You'll wait so long the workers will turn their backs on us and go ahead on their own.

*Stalin.* Cool down, Felix. The Central Committee is about to meet and we'll decide then.

*Trotsky.* Felix Edmundovich, it's very simple. Everything depends on the congress, on its firm policy.

*Dzerzhinsky.* Are you so certain of that policy? I'm not!

*Trotsky.* Now there's where we must direct our efforts. Tomorrow the congress will proclaim the transfer of power to us...

*Dzerzhinsky.* And if it doesn't? If it hesitates? For the moment we have just 300 delegates out of 670...

*Trotsky (with conviction).* The majority will vote for us. Kerensky, of course, will refuse to submit to that decision, and then his removal will be a police and not a political matter. By a simple tactical move — taking power through the Congress of Soviets — we shall carry through a world historic task without any bloodshed. Smooth and simple.

*Stalin.* If there are questions which can be resolved by simply counting hands, why take them onto the street?

*Dzerzhinsky.* So, everything we're doing now...

*Trotsky.* Is defence, Felix, defence and no more. But

that certainly doesn't mean that all our units shouldn't be mobilised and ready. Active defence, if you like.

*Dzerzhinsky.* What kind of defence is it, damn it, when the government has already issued an order for the arrest of the Revolutionary Military Committee! (*To Sverdlov.*) Andrei, why aren't you saying anything?

*Trotsky.* If the government should think of arresting us, then we'll set up machine-guns on the roof of the Smolny. I'll give the order now. However, I'm not expecting any such venture by the government. It's paralysed, it's waiting only to be swept away by the broom of history to surrender its power.

*Dzerzhinsky.* We need Lenin here to consult with. Let's send a loyal company to fetch him ... it's high time he was here.

*Stalin.* That would be premature. We can't put his life at risk.

*Trotsky.* We'll take power, and then Vladimir Ilyich will come to the Smolny with a guard of honour (*he smiles*) and on a white horse... Well, we shan't allow ourselves to be provoked into an attack, shan't allow ourselves to be drawn in. We'll simply respond and...

*Stalin.* We'll wait for the Congress. (*Leaving.*) I'll be back in a moment.

*Trotsky.* Yes, definitely — we'll wait for the congress.

*Dzerzhinsky* (*sitting down next to Sverdlov*). Why aren't you saying anything?

*Sverdlov.* I can't seem to forget his cry in his last letter: "Defence is the death of armed uprising."

## FOFANOVA'S APARTMENT. 8.25 in the morning

*Fofanova* and *Lenin* are having breakfast, surrounded by newspapers.

*Fofanova.* Not a single newspaper kiosk had a copy of *Rabochy Put*. I even went to Finlyandsky Station, but there were none there either, and no one knew anything.

*Lenin.* Strange. What's happening outside?

*Fofanova.* Everything's as usual ... people are hurrying to work.

*Lenin.* Did you see any troops?

*Fofanova.* No, I didn't notice... Don't worry, Vladimir Ilyich, everything will sort itself out.

*Lenin.* There might not be such a favourable situation as today for another hundred years... We agreed that we'd begin today... But if they've been seized yet again with a desire to wait for the congress ... it's either total idiocy or total treachery.

*Fofanova.* Oh, come now, how can you talk of treachery?

*Lenin.* I can't settle. You don't think it's easy for me to be so isolated when everything is riding on this one card? Why don't they want me to be at the Smolny?

*Fofanova.* The police are looking for you.

*Lenin.* They wouldn't catch me at the Smolny... The whole point is that revolution will not tolerate delays. You must always advance, press on ... always onwards ... not recklessly, but also not dragging your feet... The one thing you must not do is stop ... onwards ... onwards ... as Goethe said — "weiter, weiter...". When will you be back?

*Fofanova.* By eight.

*Lenin.* On your way call and give Nadezhda Konstantinovna this message.

*Fofanova.* Vladimir Ilyich, I know that when you're worried, you always begin to pace up and down ... you have a heavy tread, a man's tread, and our neighbours underneath know I live here alone.

*Lenin.* Very well, I'll try... I'll walk on tiptoe.

*Fofanova.* When I get back, I'll ring three times, as usual.

## THE SMOLNY. 11.30 in the morning

*Stalin* comes to the front of the stage.

*Stalin.* The comrades have asked me to describe for you the situation in the city at this hour. In the Revolutionary Military Committee there are two opinions. The first favours an immediate uprising. The second wants us first to gather our forces. I have to inform you that the Central Committee of our party has adopted the second — to continue to gather our forces. We are hoping that the people will bring pressure to bear on the Congress of Soviets. The old government will give way to the new all the more peacefully the stronger, more organised and concerted the action of the masses... (*He moves to one side.*) And now I would like to express my categorical protest against this hostile and anti-party attack by the theatre. Trotsky and I could never have shared the same common policy. This is imposition, we are not free



here, we are compelled to say the devil knows what in support of dubious views, and are obliged to obey! I protest!

*Dzerzhinsky.* Stalin, leave the theatre alone. These are your words, your opinions, it was all published in 1922 in the journal *Proletarskaya Revolutsia*, and you didn't protest then. Why not? Because then we were all still alive?

*Stalin.* I don't like the way they're beginning to rummage around in the past, seeking out nuances and nuances of nuances in our opinions, our relations to each other. The motive force of history is the people. Why is our heroic people not represented here? Why are we not shown the masses, why do they not bring out onto the stage those who performed their historic exploit in October 1917? A play about the revolution without the people? I suggest that is no accident.

*Sverdlov.* Something else is being discussed here: how much events in life, and particularly in a revolution, depend on those who are at the helm. That's a question which interests everyone.

*Bukharin.* Except those who are at the helm.

## FOFANOVA'S APARTMENT. 12.20 in the afternoon

*Lenin* is pacing rapidly up and down, clearly agitated.

*Plekhanov* and *Martov* rise from their seats.

The light changes.

*Plekhanov.* I want to talk to you as the founding father of Russian Social-Democracy.

*Martov.* And I as an old ... former friend.

*Lenin (sharply).* I don't have the time now for empty words. Positions have been clearly defined, the barricades have been erected, we know each other's arguments by heart. What's the point of further conversations?

*Martov.* The point is that today we have before us the whole of your experience. We can calmly analyse it and draw conclusions which will be needed by those who might want to follow the same path.

*Lenin.* Why should I have to listen to you now, when my nerves are stretched to breaking point?

*Plekhanov.* Because, devil take it, young man, we are socialists! We separated over the ways and means of achieving the idea, but we share the same idea! Therefore any trag-

edy that strikes you also strikes us, and vice versa! Whoever does not see another's tragedy as his own is not a socialist!

*Martov.* The Bolsheviks were and remain for me comrades, committing a dreadful mistake, it is true, yet nonetheless comrades.

*Lenin.* Your hatred for us, which borders on the indecent, has made you today the standard-bearers of anti-Bolshevism.

*Plekhanov.* I don't deny it.

*Lenin.* And tomorrow...

*Plekhanov.* You know very well what will happen tomorrow! Tomorrow Savinkov will come to see me and propose that I, as the most influential socialist, head a new government which will destroy with fire and sword the power of the Council of People's Commissars. And you know what I replied! "I did not give forty years of my life to the working class in order to shoot it when it made a mistake!"

*Lenin.* Yes, I know about that.

*Plekhanov.* And I know what will happen to you in five years' time, how your comrade-in-arms, become by then your overseer, will help you to combat your accursed illness. And this tragedy which struck you at the end of your life leads me to hope that you will listen to me.

*Lenin.* What do you mean — overseer? It's far more complex than that.

*Martov.* After the publication of the diaries of your secretaries, where they made a note of all the conversations they had with you, the whole world knows about the battle you waged in the winter of 1923 for the right to say your last words to the party. How you stole extra minutes of dictation, how you suffered without newspapers and information. Not an overseer? But he knew that, for you, his guardianship was loss of personal freedom. Fotiyeva duly reported everything back to him, and he knew very well that the convalescent regime which he had set up around you — total isolation from everything outside — you saw as the result of his instructions to the doctors, and not the other way round. If he saw, knew that he was causing you so much torment, so much suffering, why did he not give way, why did he not step down?

*Stalin.* I did offer to step down, but my request was refused.

*Martov.* The silent, sick Lenin suited him, the letter dictating — never. Yesterday he demanded that the General

Secretary be replaced, and tomorrow? So the regime was tightened up, the isolation reinforced, the penalties for those who violated it increased.

The light changes.

*Stalin.* Listen Krupskaya, I want to have a word with you. How is Vladimir Ilyich feeling? What's the news today on that front?

*Krupskaya.* Tolerable, but no more.

*Stalin.* I've sent him some grapes and pears. They were brought by some friends from Tiflis. They're very good grapes, autumn grapes.

*Krupskaya.* Thank you.

*Stalin.* Tell me, Krupskaya, do you know about the Politbureau resolution on the convalescent regime for Ilyich? Have you been informed about it?

*Krupskaya.* Yes, why, what's the matter?

*Stalin.* At the last plenum of the Central Committee we discussed the question of foreign trade, which seriously worries our patient.

*Krupskaya.* He's worried that you, Bukharin and other Central Committee members could make such a mistake.

*Stalin.* He sent a letter to Trotsky from which even a blind man could see that he knows about everything.

*Krupskaya.* Well, and what about it?

*Stalin.* Who gave you the right to go against a resolution of the Politbureau?

*Krupskaya.* You can't be serious?

*Stalin.* Who gave you the right to inform Lenin about political affairs? Surely you haven't forgotten the nature of Ilyich's illness? The slightest worry could end in catastrophe. You can't play games with the fate of the party.

*Krupskaya.* I don't think I follow you.

*Stalin.* You don't follow? You think there are two disciplines in the party — one for everyone, and another for the wife of Lenin? What will become of the party if it has two disciplines — one for ordinary mortals, and one for a select few? I'm telling you clearly: we shall not tolerate it! As general secretary I forbid you to talk about political matters with Lenin.

*Krupskaya.* I know better than any doctor...

*Stalin.* No, not better. There is and can be no monopoly on Lenin — that of a wife or that of a sister. When he gets better, gets back on his feet — then, please, as you wish!

*Krupskaya.* What was that you said?

*Stalin.* Otherwise I shall be obliged, despite all my respect for you, to bring you up before the Control Commission. And as for what the Control Commission will decide — don't have any illusions on that score! The health of Lenin is not your family property. It belongs to the whole party.

*Krupskaya.* A wife is better placed to know...

*Stalin.* To sleep with the leader doesn't mean to know the leader!

*Krupskaya.* How dare you!

The light changes.

*Lenin.* What's the matter, Nadya? Is something worrying you?

*Krupskaya.* No, no, I've simply been walking rather quickly and I'm tired. I'll lie down for a moment. (*She moves to one side, towards Kamenev.*) Lev Borisovich!

*Kamenev.* Yes, Nadezhda Konstantinovna.

*Krupskaya.* About that little letter which the doctors allowed Vladimir Ilyich to dictate to me, Stalin permitted himself ... towards me ... he was extremely rude.

*Kamenev.* Please, I beg you, don't get upset.

*Krupskaya.* I didn't join the party yesterday! In the whole of my thirty years I have never heard a single rude word from any comrade.

*Kamenev.* Nadezhda Konstantinovna...

*Krupskaya.* The interests of the party and Ilyich are no less dear to me than they are to Stalin.

*Kamenev.* Of course, of course!

*Krupskaya.* I know better than any doctor what I can and what I can't talk about with Ilyich. I know what worries him and what doesn't — and certainly better than Stalin!

*Kamenev.* Nadezhda Konstantinovna, I beg you, take a hold of yourself!

*Krupskaya.* I'm asking you to protect me against a rude invasion into my private life, against unworthy language and threats. I'm not questioning the unanimous resolution of the Control Commission, which Stalin allows himself to use to threaten me, but I have neither the strength nor the time to waste on such a stupid squabble. I'm also made of flesh and blood, and my nerves are worn to a tatter!

*Kamenev.* I can only implore you to say nothing of this to Ilyich. I'll see to it!

The light changes.

*Lenin.* Almost three months have passed — has he seen to it?

*Krupskaya.* How did you find out?

*Lenin.* What did Stalin say to you?

*Krupskaya.* How did you find out?

*Lenin.* That doesn't matter. What did he say?

*Krupskaya.* Nothing. You've got something wrong, misunderstood.

*Lenin.* Very well. I happened to hear your conversation with Manyasha.

*Krupskaya.* This morning?

*Lenin.* Yes.

*Krupskaya.* And waited for Manyasha to leave?

*Lenin.* What did he say to you?

*Krupskaya.* Get into bed immediately. Just look at your face.

*Lenin.* I couldn't care less!

*Krupskaya.* Take your medicine.

*Lenin.* To hell with medicine! What did he say to you?

*Krupskaya.* You mustn't get upset, you'll get yourself all worked up.

*Lenin.* Tell me this minute. I refuse to tolerate for one moment an insult offered to my wife. Forty years ago we were warned that the Russian revolution would give people only one right — the right to dishonour.<sup>11</sup> Are we to agree? Wash our hands? Bolsheviki without honour.

*Krupskaya.* Do you want to pay with your life? An excessive price!

*Lenin.* Honour has no price! What did he say to you?

*Krupskaya* (*realising there is no way out, that each refusal on her part is only increasing his agitation*). It was in connection with the letter to Trotsky which you dictated to me.

*Lenin.* What?

*Krupskaya.* He shouted at me. But I've already told him that I've forgotten about what was said.

*Lenin.* What do you mean, shouted at you?

*Krupskaya* (*after a pause*). He said something he shouldn't have.

*Lenin.* What?



*Krupskaya.* Isn't that enough for you?

*Lenin.* Get me a chair ... give me your arm.

*Krupskaya.* Volodya ... Volodenka ... Volodya, it was nothing, I've already forgotten about it.

*Lenin.* Give me your arm.

*Krupskaya.* Volodya! Volodya! Don't shut your eyes!

*Lenin.* In a minute ... in a minute ... I'll be alright.

*Krupskaya.* I'll send for the doctors!

*Lenin.* Don't you dare do anything of the kind. This is our business! He'll be told about it straight away. I'll be better in a minute. I'll just lie down for a moment ... close my eyes ... everything's swimming, spots. I'll be alright in a minute. I must find the strength ... for another letter. Take my arm ... sit next to me. If I go out, it'll just be for a moment. Don't be frightened. I'll find the strength. I'll dictate everything in just a moment ... everything that has to be said in a situation like this. (*He falls silent.*)

The light changes.

*Martov.* Vladimir Ilyich, just ignore him.

*Plekhanov.* Our conversation with you is a serious one, we need you fit and well.

*Lenin.* And I am listening to you attentively. I even give my word not to interrupt.

*Plekhanov.* Vladimir Ilyich, the flour still does not exist out of which one might bake Russia's socialist pie, our peasant isn't ready yet for socialism. Before your famous housewife has learned to manage the state, do you know how much crockery will be broken? You can't dive into the water before you know how to swim. We'll drown the idea of socialism.

*Lenin (deliberately calm).* And who will enlighten the people, Georgi Valentinovich? Who will teach them democracy? Those who understand only too well that the political enlightenment of the masses spells the end of their power? And if the people themselves were to take power, and on the basis of that power undertake enlightenment and culture? You can't dive into the water before you know how to swim. But neither can you learn to swim without getting into the water.

*Martov.* It's something else that worries me: a dark, drunken people can be controlled only by the truncheon. I

even ask myself — will you, who never sought personal power, who always and invariably refused to allow a halo to be placed around your head, will you not become the leader of the abolition of the revolutionary period by terrorist methods or, on the contrary, become the victim of such methods? Very well, very well, I can almost physically feel your lethal irony. But don't listen to me, listen to your friend, your fellow socialist for whom you have such regard...

*Lenin (realising who he means).* Rosa? Luxemburg? Of course, *Letters from Prison*? Yes, I'll be happy to! And although she revised some of her opinions after her release, that changes nothing — as always, Rosa's warnings are profound and serious. But remember, she's a person of conviction, obstinate. You're not afraid? Rosa, go ahead!

*Rosa Luxemburg.* First of all, I'm very happy to be making my first appearance on the Russian stage — until now I was inconvenient. Secondly, I shall speak here of that which I never had occasion to reconsider, that which I had from the first day I became a socialist and which I shall take with me to the grave.

*Martov.* Rosa, a little lower down, where you talk about a clique.

*Rosa.* Yuli Osipovich, I'll decide for myself what to say and when. (*Lenin laughs softly.*) The Bolsheviks, having carried through a revolution, are the first among us to become people of the deed, and have thus saved the honour of international socialism. Thank God they found the courage to ignore the doctrinaire approach of their Mensheviks and our own dull-witted followers of Marx, who denied Russia, because of her backwardness, the right to a proletarian revolution. Thank God there were, in the end, those amongst us able to show the whole world that they prefer not congresses, conferences, reports and essays on revolution, but revolution itself!

*Lenin.* Bravo, Rosa!

*Rosa.* Of course, I am a fanatical supporter of democracy and they shocked me, but I have always sought and found mitigating circumstances. They were more than right to use the mailed fist to crush any resistance, but these measures should not have become a general rule over a long period.

*Lenin.* Bravo, Rosa!

*Rosa.* However, of course, if political life in the country is stifled...

*Martov.* That's it, that's the place!

*Rosa* (*paying no attention to Martov*). ...The Soviets will also be unable to avoid progressive paralysis. Without general elections, freedom of the press and of association, the free conflict of opinion, life in any social institution stagnates, becomes mere appearance, and the only active element in such a life is the bureaucracy. Social life gradually falls into a lethargy: government is exercised by just a few dozen very energetic party leaders inspired by boundless idealism. Real power is in the hands of this small group of leaders, and the working-class elite is periodically convened merely to applaud the speeches delivered by the leaders and unanimously vote for a resolution prepared in advance. Thus, in effect, this is the power of a clique: their dictatorship is not, of course, the dictatorship of the proletariat, but the dictatorship of a handful of politicians. In my opinion, the dictatorship of the proletariat is the broadest possible democracy. Socialism without political freedom is not socialism. Without freedom there is neither the political education of the masses, nor their full participation in political life. Freedom only for the active supporters of the government, only for the members of the party, however numerous they might be, is not freedom. Freedom — always and only freedom — for those who think differently. Danger for the Bolsheviks begins where temporary, repulsive necessity becomes a permanent virtue.

*Lenin.* Bravo, Rosa! (*Speaking calmly, even pleasantly to Martov.*) You once wrote about the five-year terror awaiting us. But I tell you, if we fail to establish the right relations between the workers and the peasantry, not five but twenty to forty years of counterrevolution and terror are guaranteed! If we fail to involve the people in the management of the state, remain power for the people, and not the power of the people themselves, we shall hand over the country to bureaucracy, replace policy with political intrigue; if we run from democracy like the devil from incense, if the class is replaced by the party, the party by the apparatus, and the apparatus hangs on to every word of the leader, and anything original, any opinion which differs from that of the leader, is treated as a crime against the state, if the turbulence of life is suppressed by fear and replaced by barracks, we will face the most dreadful question of all: what for? That is a real and menacing danger, and such a possibility exists — Rosa is right! — but that result is definitely

not unavoidable, not preprogrammed! I'm convinced of it! Anyone who is able to read and think will, I hope, appreciate what is the programme of the October Revolution, and what distorts and discredits it. I am in total agreement with Rosa: the danger we face is that of making a virtue of necessity. (*Martov and Plekhanov are silent.*) Very well, let's return to 24 October. Yes, everything is on the boil. Our role, I assure you, is secondary, events are guiding the party, and not the party — events. The people will make a move in any case, will make it without us — and then the triumph of anarchy and disorder is guaranteed, or we lead the movement, ennoble it, introduce conscious action. The bloody dictatorship of Kornilov, or a proletarian revolution, socialist democracy. What is to be done?

*Plekhanov.* Well, disorder must, of course, be stopped. Stopped by every possible means. Whatever else, you must not provoke another Kornilov! Let the bourgeois revolution establish itself, its democratic development will finally put a socialist revolution on the agenda, and meanwhile...

*Lenin.* That's just the point — what meanwhile?

*Plekhanov.* Slowly, gradually, step by step...

*Lenin (mischievously.)* Slowly but surely, shyly, demurely? A long time ago, in exile, we had our own poet ... one of my closest friends ... he was a fine revolutionary in his youth. What a remarkable comrade ... what integrity ... what a keen mind. How we missed him later... And his sense of humour! He'd heard enough talk about that — slowly, gradually, step by step, and composed a brilliant parody... (*He sings.*)

*Over our heads thunderclouds grimly lower,  
Dark forces batter us, clout after clout,*

(*To Martov.*) Join in!

*Martov (laughing, to Plekhanov).* I wrote it... (*He joins in.*)

*Our slavish backs are with bloody welts covered,  
Furiously lashed by the barbarous knout.*

The Bolsheviks — Sverdlov, Bukharin, Stalin, Ordzhonikidze, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Dzerzhinsky, Kamenev and Krupskaya join in gustily, singing a song which reminds them of their youth, of the time when they were all together.

*Rubbing our backsides, we'll sit on the latter  
And take a practical view of the matter.  
Knouts will wear out, folks, so be of good cheer —  
You will be free in a few hundred years.*

*Slowly but surely, shyly, demurely,  
Working class, go! Only, go really slow.*

*Our rebel hands will not reach for the crown,  
They will not threaten the autocrat's sway.  
His blood-bespattered, ramshackle throne  
Will of itself fall in ruins one fine day.*

*Politics isn't for us — it may suit you:  
You are great demagogues, or so it seems.  
Don't talk to us of a communist future,  
We put our faith in our fine welfare schemes.*

*In slow motion, proceed with caution,  
Working class, go! Only go really slow.*

*Bukharin. Toss the author!*

General amusement.

*Lenin (to Martov).* There's the irony of history for you: who would have thought you'd written a parody on yourself... (*He goes to sit next to Martov.*) You and I were on the verge of death at one and the same time. When I happened to see the note about your illness ... believe me ... we missed you very much. Well, let's leave that now... (*He gets up, turning to Plekhanov and Martov.*) What are we to do, gentlemen, who call themselves comrades? What are we to do on 24 October? A crisis, an impasse such as we have never faced before. And it gets worse with each day that passes. So, may a people who have fallen into such a desperate, such a hopeless situation ... do they have the right to throw themselves into the struggle and break out to freedom, even if there is only one chance in a hundred? Even if in so doing they violate the accepted order of things? Answer me, sir!

*Plekhanov.* Why is it you so dislike me, Lenin?

*Lenin (after a pause).* I never loved anyone, revered anyone so much in my life as I did you... I was so blinded by my love for you that I behaved, in fact, like a slave, and



to be a slave is unworthy. For a long time I told myself not to notice ... ill-manners ... the desire for unbounded dominion ... insincerity... Chess moves... And what remained of my love? ... We did, after all, only what you had taught us to do.

The light changes.

*Krupskaya.* What's the matter? Are you feeling any better?

*Lenin.* Yes, yes. A lot better. They helped me. Get a piece of paper. It's not simply a matter of offensive language, it's something far more important. Take this down.

*Krupskaya.* No, you mustn't, Volodya. Please, I beg you. You don't have the right...

*Lenin.* It's my duty to do it, whatever it might cost me ... even my life... (*His voice rises almost to a shout.*) But there will be no right to dishonour! No right!

*Krupskaya.* Alright... alright... only don't shout. I'm writing.

*Lenin (concentrating his thoughts).* To comrade Stalin ... strictly confidential ... for his eyes only... I do not intend to forget offences so easily, and it goes without saying ... that any offence to my wife ... I take as an offence to me. Therefore I would ask you to consider ... whether you are prepared to take back what you said and apologize ... or if you would prefer that our relations be broken off... Yours respectfully... Lenin... 5 March 1923.

*Krupskaya.* What for? Why did you do it, Volodya? Those were virtually the last words you spoke in this life... You fell seriously ill again ... and on the tenth you had another stroke.

*Lenin.* Did he apologize?

*Krupskaya.* Yes.

*Lenin.* Together with the "Letter to the Congress", that gives serious food for thought.

*Krupskaya (with a heavy sigh).* The "Letter to the Congress"...

*Lenin.* What?

The light changes.

*Zinoviev (speaking with difficulty).* Vladimir Ilyich, the thing is ... when, in May 1924, on the eve of the 13th congress, Nadezhda Konstantinovna gave us this letter containing personal character references, we were amazed...

It was like a bomb, it threw everything into disorder...

*Lenin.* How do you mean?

*Zinoviev.* A certain balance of power had already been established among the leadership in the Central Committee... For more than a year already Lev Borisovich and I had been in charge of the work of the Politbureau, sometimes together with Stalin. Our threesome formed a reliable block to the dictatorial ambitions of Trotsky. Your letter upset the balance. Stalin was offended and immediately offered his resignation. It was only with difficulty that we persuaded him to withdraw it.

*Lenin.* I wrote to the congress that relations between Stalin and Trotsky accounted for the greater part of the danger of a split facing the party, and if nothing were done about it, it could happen unexpectedly. I wrote about Stalin's ill-manners and lack of loyalty, qualities quite intolerable in a General Secretary. I warned you that these qualities in Stalin were not a trifle, or a trifle such that it could acquire crucial significance for the entire fate of the party. A crucial trifle. Did you think about that?

*Zinoviev.* Of course we thought...

*Kamenev.* We thought only about how to keep Stalin.

*Lenin.* Why? Surely there were others with good organisational abilities who were more tolerant, more loyal, more considerate towards their comrades. I spoke to you about Frunze... And Dzerzhinsky? And Stalin could have been given interesting work. I was not talking about resignation but about transfer.

*Kamenev.* The thing is... (*To Zinoviev.*) I want to tell him everything.

*Zinoviev.* Go ahead.

*Kamenev.* We agreed among ourselves that Zinoviev, not Trotsky but Zinoviev, would deliver at the 13th congress the political report which you used to deliver. That was very important: the one who delivered the report would be seen by the party as your successor. Stalin eagerly supported us. And we, for our part, undertook to retain him in the post of General Secretary. The post of General Secretary was not decisive then, and Stalin himself made no claim to the role of leader. He suited us very well in that role. Try to understand, Vladimir Ilyich, there were no grounds then for thinking that Stalin might acquire absolute power. On the contrary, he supported collective leadership. I assure you, the ambitions of Lev Davidovich, his potential dicta-

torship, seemed to us then to present a far greater threat than the personal qualities of Stalin... And to be completely frank, it seemed to us that Stalin, because of his limitations, presented no danger.

*Zinoviev.* Of course, now all of this looks like some unprincipled struggle for power, but at the time the questions was how the revolution would develop further — according to Lenin's plans, or Trotsky's? It was precisely that which determined the means used in the struggle.

*Lenin.* I shall say nothing now about the content of your discussions. I shall leave to one side their aim and criteria — what was according to Lenin, what was according to Trotsky — but you should not, Grigory Yevseyevich, try to avoid your share of the responsibility for the fact that all of you — Zinoviev and Stalin and Kamenev and Trotsky — all of you introduced elements of political intrigue into a most important battle of ideas. (*To Kamenev.*) What happened next?

*Kamenev.* When we'd read your letter to the congress, we decided to do all we could to keep Stalin in his post. We secured the agreement of the plenum of the Central Committee quite easily. What I feared most was the party congress. For me, the most important thing was to prevent the letter being read and discussed at a plenary meeting of the congress. There the situation might have got out of control. I then suggested that the letter be read to each delegation separately, for "informational purposes", so to speak, and that we leave it at that. We ourselves went to see the largest delegations — I read it out, Grigory Yevseyevich made a speech ... he said that the plenum of the Central Committee had already made its decision, that the will of Ilyich was law for us, that there was one thing in which Ilyich's fears had fortunately proved unjustified. There was no danger of a split, our General Secretary would bear in mind the remarks made in his regard and merit the confidence of the party. This tactic was successful. (*He pauses.*) Forgive me, that was not exactly the right word to use.

*Bukharin.* I was among those who saw nothing to worry about in this procedure.

*Lenin (after a pause).* We all know our great people, their strength and weaknesses, their, for the moment, downtrodden ignorance... We are not blinded by national pride. But what follows from that, what action? There is the crucial question which divides people into parties and

philosophies, determines policy, morals, and all the rest. And even we, the Bolsheviks, who belong to one party, are also, in the final analysis, divided by our attitude to the people... On the podium we make our pledges in the name of the people, but in our offices we do what suits us. We prefer that order in which some deliberate and decide, while others listen obediently. A crucial question affecting the life of the party is to be decided within a circle of party officials, but certainly not together with the delegates to the congress, not with the mass of party members, of whom we are afraid. As a result, the individual becomes a means, not an end in itself. That's what unites you all... In that case is it socialism we are building, or something contrary to the principles of socialism, and which, I'm afraid, people will find repulsive... I said to Martov "if", "if", but do you yourselves realise the part you played in the fact that these dangerous but by no means inevitable circumstances became reality? And everything that followed? When you threw yourselves into Trotsky's arms and led an attack against NEP under the flag of super-industrialisation, disregarding the fate of the peasants, disregarding the fate of millions of living people. How much Bolshevism was there in that, and how many fundamental errors inadmissible for a Bolshevik, how many unprincipled ambitions and how much offended pride? Yes, comrades, these mistakes of yours will prove worse than the one in October.

*Zinoviev and Kamenev stand in subdued silence.*

*Kamenev.* From you we are prepared to hear any criticism. The only thing that is intolerable is the thought that there are those who will see it as sanctifying what happened later.

*Lenin.* Who led the prosecution at your trial?

*Kamenev.* Vyshinsky.

*Lenin.* What Vyshinsky? The Menshevik?

*Zinoviev.* The very same. In 1917 he was the chairman of the Yakimanka district council in Moscow, and followed Kerensky in signing the order for our arrest, yours and mine, as German spies... What they didn't manage to do then was done twenty years later by Mr. Vyshinsky.

*Kerensky.* I admit I felt a certain satisfaction.

*Lenin (to Kamenev and Zinoviev).* How did it happen?

*Zinoviev.* We were asked in the name of the Central Committee to agree to take part in an open trial in the interests of the party.

*Lenin.* The party?

*Kamenev.* "You opposed Stalin, and the party did not follow you. In order that your supporters lay down their arms, abandon your ideas and return again to the faith of the party, they must all see to what the opposition has come, the swamp into which Trotsky, Kamenev and Zinoviev have led it..." Something of that kind...

*Zinoviev (ironically).* We had to admit to very little: on Trotsky's orders we organised the murder of Kirov and planned the murder of Stalin, Voroshilov and other party leaders.

*Kamenev.* And if we agreed, our wives, children, friends and comrades would be spared.

*Zinoviev.* Vladimir Ilyich, by that time we were already broken, morally and physically.

*Kamenev.* We told Yagoda that we agreed, but on condition that Stalin would confirm all his promises in the presence of the whole Politbureau.

*Zinoviev.* When we were taken to his office in the Kremlin, the only members of the Politbureau present were Stalin and Voroshilov.

*Kamenev.* We came to a halt in the middle of the office. They sat and we stood. No one spoke. Finally Stalin indicated some chairs.

The light changes.

*Stalin.* Well, what do you have to say?

*Kamenev.* We were promised that our case would be examined at a meeting of the Politbureau.

*Stalin.* You see before you a commission of the Politbureau empowered to listen to everything you have to say.

*Zinoviev.* Over the last two years, Lev Borisovich and I have been made many promises, but not one of them was kept. Can we now rely on the new ones? When, after the death of Sergei Mironovich, we were forced to say that we were morally responsible for his murder, Yagoda gave us your personal promise that it was our last sacrifice. Yet now another show trial is being planned which will throw mud not only at us, but also at the entire party, the entire revolution, discredit the very essence of Bolshevism in the eyes of the whole world.



*Stalin.* Don't try to frighten us. We are not easily frightened.

*Zinoviev.* I appeal to your reason ... I implore you to cancel this trial... It will stain the country with unprecedented shame. It will strike at the very idea of socialism. If you so wish to have us killed, then kill us without any noise, but don't force old Bolsheviks to confess to being a gang of murderers. Stop and think, you want to present the members of Lenin's Politbureau, his personal friends — yes, we argued! yes, we shouted at each other! but we were close to each other! — you want to present us as unprincipled criminals, and our Bolshevik party ... the party of the proletarian revolution, as a nest of traitors and spies... If Vladimir Ilyich were alive, if he could see all of this... (*He is unable to stop himself, breaking down.*)

*Kamenev.* Don't you understand? If we, old Bolsheviks, are terrorists, this means we have to renounce all the principles of Bolshevism.

*Stalin.* Surely not for the first time? One inevitably asks: do these people so value their principles, their views, their convictions? No one in history changed so easily from one set of principles to another, no one ever changed his opinions with such ease as these people. With Stalin against Trotsky, with Trotsky against Stalin. If you have renounced your views so often, will it be so difficult for you to renounce them again? I don't think we're imposing such a heavy burden on Kamenev and Zinoviev, in any case it's a familiar one. How much shouting, crying and howling over nothing: you've renounced before, why not renounce once again?

*Kamenev.* Has it never occurred to you that we supported you while you were following Lenin's policy? That you prefer the principle of personal devotion in place of...

*Zinoviev (afraid).* Lev Borisovich!

*Stalin.* Does Kamenev wish to say something? We are listening. (*Kamenev is silent.*) In the Politbureau some quite rightly say: Thank you, Kamenev and Zinoviev, for your former successful work in the party, for your former successful battle against Trotskyism, which served as a lesson for many. However, their tragedy lies in the fact that they themselves renounced their noble past. We have to admit that we were concerned for them, did all we could to keep them in the leadership of the party, but they themselves did everything possible to destroy all former bonds of friendship.

They, if you please, resented the fact that it was no longer they who determined the life of the party, no longer they who dictated their will to the party, no longer they who, to speak figuratively, were up in the saddle. Instead of accepting this, restraining their arrogance, crawling on their belly with words of repentance on their lips, they attempted to seize hold of life by the coat-tails, they went over to Trotsky. What did the great Lenin say was to be done with treacherous leaders? I'm also a pupil of Lenin, and I understand his thinking as follows: either total and unconditional capitulation, or else let them depart. And if they don't leave, we'll kick them out.

*Zinoviev.* We're guilty of many things before the party, we're not seeking now, on the edge of the grave, to whitewash ourselves. But never, even in our thoughts, did we...

*Stalin.* And who said about me at the plenum of the Central Committee: "Whatever position we are placed in by the clique of Stalinists now running amuck, we shall fight to the end against the gravediggers of the revolution"? Who said of me that our party congresses are the ultimate triumph of the apparatus mechanism? Who gleefully repeated about me that I'm the most genial mediocrity in our party? Who said of me at the 14th party congress: "I have come to the opinion that Comrade Stalin cannot fill the role of uniting the Bolshevik headquarters"? I never forget anything. You are pygmies who have presumed to think that you are saving the revolution... In 1917 you were all guilty of betraying the revolution, also under the banner of saving it.

*Kamenev.* In 1917 you didn't think like that. It was you who spoke out against Lenin's proposal to exclude us from the party.

*Stalin.* I caught it from Lenin for that, and quite rightly. (*To Zinoviev.*) It's too late to weep now. What were you thinking of when you decided to oppose the Central Committee? The Central Committee warned you on more than one occasion that your opposition would have a tragic end. You would not listen, and it did end tragically. Even now you are told: bow to the will of the party, and you, and all those whom you have led into the swamp, will be spared. But again you do not wish to listen. So you have only yourselves to thank if the affair ends even more tragically, as wretchedly as it possibly could.

*Kamenev.* And where is the guarantee that we shan't be deceived yet again?

*Stalin.* Guarantee? And anyway, what could serve as a guarantee? That's simply nonsense! Perhaps you would like an official agreement ratified by the League of Nations? Zinoviev and Kamenev have obviously forgotten that they are not at some provincial bazaar haggling over a stolen horse, but at the Politbureau of the Communist Party of Bolsheviks. If the assurances given by the Politbureau are not sufficient for them, then, comrades, I do not know if there is any point in continuing to talk to them. What was that? Voroshilov is saying that if Zinoviev and Kamenev have so much as a grain of common sense left, they should get down on their knees before Comrade Stalin for sparing their lives. And if they have no common sense left, to the devil with them, let them die! What does Zinoviev have to say to us? Does he have at least a grain of common sense?

*Zinoviev (after a long silence).* I have.

*Stalin.* There was a time when Zinoviev and Kamenev were known for the clarity of their thinking and their ability to approach a question dialectically. Now they think like philistines. Yes, comrades, like the most primitive philistines. They have convinced themselves that we are organising a trial in order to have them shot. That is simply ridiculous! As if we cannot have them shot without any trial at all if we find that necessary. They are forgetting three things: firstly, the trial is directed not against them, but against Trotsky, the accursed enemy of our party... Secondly, if we did not have them shot when they were actively opposing the Central Committee, why should we have them shot after they help the Central Committee in its battle against Trotsky? Thirdly, our comrades are also forgetting that we Bolsheviks are pupils and followers of Lenin, and that we do not wish to shed the blood of old party members, whatever serious transgressions they may have committed against the party.

A long pause.

*Kamenev.* We agree. But we would like to be assured once again that none of the oppositionists, nor their wives or children will be subjected to harassment, and that there will continue to be no death penalty for previous participation in the opposition.

*Stalin.* That can be taken as read.  
*Kamenev.* If that is so, then we agree.

The light changes.

*Sverdlov.* But Stalin, even then you already knew...

*Stalin (angrily).* I always knew just one thing: all these Zinovievs, Kamenevs, Bukharins and Rykovs were constantly getting in my way, seizing my hands and making it impossible to fulfill the behests of the great Lenin. And I had sworn at his graveside, and I kept my word, whatever you all may say about it!

The light changes. A dead march is played.

*Stalin.* Comrades, we Communists are people of a special mould. We are made of a special stuff. We are those who make up the army of the great proletarian strategist, the army of Comrade Lenin. There is no calling higher than the honour of belonging to that army. There is no calling higher than the title of member of the party founded and led by Comrade Lenin. Not everyone is able to be a member of such a party. Not everyone can endure the hardships and storms that accompany membership of such a party.

Departing from us, Comrade Lenin enjoined us to hold high and guard the purity of the great title of member of the party. We vow to you, Comrade Lenin, that we shall fulfill your behest with honour.

For twenty-five years comrade Lenin moulded our party, and moulded it into the strongest and most highly steelled workers' party in the world. Our party forged its unity and solidarity in bitter battles, and thanks to this unity and solidarity it achieved victory over the enemies of the working class.

Departing from us, Comrade Lenin enjoined us to guard the unity of our party as the apple of our eye. We vow to you, Comrade Lenin, that we shall also carry out that task with honour!

*Lenin (unable to restrain himself).* Stop it! I can't listen to it any longer!

*Martov.* The irony of history has not passed you by either.

*Lenin (mastering himself).* Well, as it is written, and the evening and the morning were...

## THE WINTER PALACE. 12.30 in the afternoon

*Kerensky* is listening to a report by *Polkovnikov*.

*Polkovnikov*. All the military colleges in Petrograd have been put on stand-by. The officer cadets from Peterhof have been billeted in the Winter Palace. We have intercepted a message radioed from the *Avrora* in which the Revolutionary Military Committee calls to act cautiously, but firmly and decisively.

*Kerensky*. Cautiously...

*Polkovnikov*. According to information received from Maliantovich, Lenin's whereabouts have been discovered. He should be arrested at any moment. Given the strategic situation, I would recommend that the Bolsheviks be deprived of the freedom to manoeuvre, the possibility of operating freely across the entire city.

*Kerensky*. Very well. Raise the bridges!

CURTAIN



## PART TWO

### THE SMOLNY. 1.20 in the afternoon

*Trotsky (coming to the front of the stage).* We are being asked if we are preparing to come out. That will depend on those who wish to disrupt the All-Russia Congress. If the government wishes to use that brief period of time — 24, 48 or 72 hours — which still remain before its demise in order to launch an attack on us, then we shall reply with a counterattack, return blow for blow, strike iron with steel!

The Kerensky government thinks that history is made in salons and offices, where parvenu democrats exchange fine words with titled liberals, and yesterday's incompetents from among the provincial lawyers hurriedly learn how to kiss the hands of Their Excellencies. Fools! Braggarts! Dunderheads! History is made in the trenches, where the soldier, drunk with the horror of war, thrusts his bayonet into the belly of an officer and then flees to his native village riding on the buffer of a train and sets fire to the landowner's mansion. You don't like such barbarity? Restrain your anger, replies history, and rejoice in what you have. It is merely the result of all that went before. Do you seriously imagine that today history is being made in the Winter Palace? Rubbish, babble, phantasmagoria, cretinism! History — so you should know! — has chosen this time as its spade-work laboratory a former school for daughters of the nobility, and from here it is preparing to wipe out the whole of our landowner-bourgeois corruption and baseness. Grimy factory delegates, grey, bent and lice-ridden men from the trenches, are coming here, to the Smolny

Institute, and from here they carry out across the country new and momentous words: "Long live the socialist revolution of workers and peasants!" (*He moves to one side and addresses the auditorium and those on the stage.*) And now I wish to protest against the clearly tendentious nature of this theatre. It is time, comrades, to have done with the schema of the *Short History*! More than once after the October Revolution I wrote that our publicly proclaimed tactic of waiting for the Congress of Soviets was nothing more than a deliberate ruse to distract Kerensky, a manoeuvre which blunted his vigilance, a kind of camouflage. Planning an uprising under the open slogan of the seizure of power by the party is one thing, preparing and then carrying through an uprising under the slogan of defending the rights of the Congress of Soviets is quite another. Surely you can see that? Why continue to follow tamely behind the Stalinist falsifiers of history?

*Martov.* Listen, Trotsky, that's not true. At the time, none of us who took part in this drama, either at the Smolny or in the Winter Palace, fully realised what was happening. We were all borne along by events. Yes, you were waiting for the congress, and you had your reasons. But all that theory of camouflage you read about in our Sukhanov about two years after the revolution, and then decided to make it yours. You needed it to remove the contradiction between your policy and that of Lenin, who said that to wait for the congress was total idiocy. I assure you that if the congress had not convened against the backdrop of an uprising, neither we nor the Socialist-Revolutionaries would have left the congress, and the hands of the Bolsheviks would have remained tied. You did indeed play a major role in organising the uprising, no one can deny that, but if it were not for Lenin, if he had not come to the Smolny at midnight, you would have become, to use the Western expression, a man of "missed opportunities".

## BYKHOV. 2.40 in the afternoon

The generals are discussing *Lukomsky's* plan.

*Markov.* Kollontai.

*Kornilov.* Certainly.

*Lukomsky.* Maxim Gorky.

*Denikin.* Martov as well, and Plekhanov.

*Kornilov.* Bronstein ... Kamenev ... Stalin... And what's his name — Ioffe.

*Markov.* As far as the Bolsheviks are concerned, it's perfectly clear — all of them have to go.

*Denikin.* It would be a good idea to put some of them on trial, at least the leaders.

*Markov.* What for? The main thing is not to stand on ceremony with them and tie our own hands with legal formalities.

*Lukomsky.* We can manage one trial. A well-motivated and prepared charge of espionage for Germany — that will have a far greater effect than merely shooting them. That's political shooting.

*Kornilov.* The whole of the left, so-called revolutionary democracy — there can be no question of that. The country will display understanding. I'm talking about something else — we need to create a state of shock, of paralysis, so that not one of those scum will dare raise his head. You understand? Shock! Shall we achieve that by putting Lenin up against the wall alongside some worker? Never. But if the Rodziankos and Miliukovs, Struves and Berdyaevs are all swinging from lampposts...

*Markov.* Don't forget Kerensky!

*Denikin.* To include Struve is going too far.

*Kornilov.* There's no danger of going too far, Anton Ivanovich, but there is the danger of not going far enough. We'll paralyse the lot of them only if our net is broad enough. I don't play games. Away with them all, the whole of that thinking, chattering, pretentious public — all our misfortunes come from them! If Russia passes through a convulsion, then you can consider the victory ours. I'm not a bloodthirsty man, believe me, I'm also looking at things from a practical point of view. You and I have to save Russia. It isn't we who brought her to the brink of disaster, but we now have to save her.

*Lukomsky.* Only a convulsion will enable us to carry through our plan for an effective military dictatorship. The whole of the population will be divided into three armies — one to fight at the front, one to run the transport system, and one to work in industry on the home front. The Soviets will be dissolved, all mass organisations, trade unions, will be disbanded, and the press, except for our own, closed down...

*Denikin.* Now why do that? We're Europeans after all. Strict censorship will be enough.

*Lukomsky.* Very well. All parties will be disbanded. All public activity must take place via a new political party led by Kornilov.

*Denikin.* I'm also not sure about that. We'd do better to begin staying in the wings. We're generals, men of action. We can always find chatterboxes for the party.

*Markov (laughing).* Yes, we'd better leave someone for...

*Kornilov.* Add the immediate disbanding and screening of all the revolutionised units. For the soldiers in those units — a concentration camp with the strictest possible regime and reduced rations. A system of court-martial and the death penalty for civilians across the country. I don't trust either Petrograd or Moscow. Let the Cossacks operate there to start with.

*Lukomsky.* And the problem of the future system of government?

*Markov.* Given our historical traditions, the character of our peasant, his habits, he requires just one. A monarchy and only a monarchy.

*Lukomsky.* As for putting a tsar on the throne, better five years late than five minutes too soon.

*Denikin.* I wouldn't decide in advance. First of all we need to get into the Winter Palace. Thereafter, however, I wouldn't object to a military dictatorship.

*Lukomsky.* And the Constituent Assembly?

*Markov.* Dissolve it immediately it's convened if it rejects our dictatorship.

*Kerensky.* Just a minute! Stop! Did you hear that! Do you feel the link between the two forms of Russian extremism? On 5 January 1918, the Bolsheviks dissolved the Constituent Assembly because it rejected the Bolshevik regime. And what did the gentlemen generals do with the deputies to the Constituent Assembly? No, not these, their brothers under the skin — Kolchak and those like him. I see it as my duty to publicise this story! First of all the Socialist-Revolutionary deputies were arrested by Kolchak in Omsk. The Bolsheviks stirred up an uprising and freed all those who had been arrested, but (*carried away*), alas, they were ousted. The Kolchak supporters proposed that all those who had been arrested return to their cells, guaranteeing their lives in return. Our noble comrades, those same deputies to the Constituent Assembly, returned to their cells

as befits honest revolutionaries. And what then? That same night the representatives of the people were dragged out of prison and ran through with bayonets. The soldiers did not want even to waste bullets. Let the public know about it! I'll go even further: I always believed that the victory of the generals would have given rise in Russia to a form of military-fascist dictatorship! That would really be the path to the grave!

*Kornilov (to Kerensky).* Stop jabbering! It's now three o'clock in the afternoon. You'd do better to tell us what you did to crush the Bolsheviks. Have you begun to take resolute action, or are you still doing nothing?

*Denikin.* That we were right, Mr. Kerensky, that the policy which we elaborated was the correct one, has been proved by events, by history — it was precisely those methods and means which enabled Stalin, like Peter the Great, to turn Russia into a great power in the world. It is thought, people say, that Stalin made two mistakes: when he showed Europe to Ivan, and when he showed Ivan to Europe. I most definitely do not agree. Only a non-Russian could say something like that. That Ivan was shown Europe was a great blessing, the army realised that it was a mighty national force. And most certainly it was no mistake on Stalin's part to show Europe our heroic Ivan. Let that end once and for all any desire they might have to come to us brandishing the sword.

*Stalin.* General, if you are such a supporter of the methods used by Comrade Stalin, why were you not among the group of emigres headed by Maklakov who, in Paris in the spring of 1945, went to my ambassador, Bogomolov, and declared that they recognised my government as the national government of Russia?

*Denikin.* While recognising the effectiveness of the methods and means which we only intended to use but which you used with such success, I nonetheless categorically deny your right to the throne of Russia. I believe that the Russian throne, whatever it may be called, should be occupied by a Russian.

*Stalin (deflated).* Were Nicholas II and all the Russian tsars all that Russian? You, general, are a chauvinist! Don't you think that the very question itself, in such a multinational country as ours, is simply immoral?

*Denikin.* I am a man who speaks his mind: there are things about you I like, and there are...



*Stalin.* In his book about Moscow in 1937, Feuchtwanger recalls the reply given by Socrates concerning certain obscure points in Heraclitus. The great Socrates said as follows: "What I understood is wonderful. From this I conclude that the rest, which I did not understand, is also wonderful."

### FOFANOVA'S APARTMENT. 3 o'clock in the afternoon

*Lenin* is pacing up and down, concentrated and gloomy.  
*Struve* is coming up the stairs.

The light changes.

*Struve.* Vladimir Ilyich, I would like a word with you.  
*Lenin.* Certainly.

*Struve.* It is now three o'clock. You are thinking that your place now is not here but in the Smolny. I want to prove to you that if you were to stay here, it would be a blessing for Russia. It's only three o'clock. Everything can still be changed...

*Lenin.* Pyotr Bergardovich, is it worth wasting the time? I know you so well that I could, if you like, set out what you are going to say word for word. "Our Russian is still a slave, and there are a dozen reasons for it..."

*Struve.* I'm in no mood to joke. Our Russian is indeed still a slave and there are a dozen reasons for it. Both you and I wish to see him become a free man. You believe this requires changing the external conditions, the social circumstances, in other words — a revolution is necessary. We reply that, however often the circumstances and conditions in Russia have been changed, even counting your October Revolution, the Russian nonetheless does not change — slavery has been beaten into him very firmly. But why does he not change? Because the internal essence of the individual depends not on circumstances, not on social conditions, but on whether he possesses or not a higher, spiritual principle — "The kingdom of God is within you". If a man does not become free within himself, no revolutions will liberate him. Beginning with the Decembrists and ending with you, all Russian revolutionaries were the spiritual brothers of Russian disorder, Russian disturbance-making. Because by their

exploits they aroused the people, and brought Russia only misfortune, for they gave rise to nothing except bloody revolt and bloody reprisals. There is the crime committed by the Russian intelligentsia, there is what it must repent, and renounce once and for all its attempts to arouse the people against the authorities. The true vocation of the Russian intelligentsia is not revolt and revolution! Forgive my use of Biblical wisdom, I'm sure it's not your language, but it contains a great idea, and you may appreciate it! "for you will go to give light to those who sit in darkness".

*Lenin.* How is man to get up off his knees? That, in the final analysis, is the meaning and content of our revolution. How? How to turn the frightened spectator into a fighter? Fear. There are a thousand kinds of fear. How to overcome them? I am convinced that a man is made in his activity, in action, and not by a century of kneeling in front of an icon. And when he gets up off his knees to speak the truth, to act according to the truth, to join the truth, it is at that very moment that he changes social circumstances and himself.

*Struve.* No, Ulyanov, that's the invention of a German Jew dug over in Russian fashion.

*Lenin.* Aren't you ashamed, Pyotr Berngardovich?

*Struve.* No. I myself once toyed with it, and I know what I'm saying. It's not for Russian soil, that needs seed of a different kind, pure, Great Russian. What's the matter, can't we ourselves think of something worthwhile? Haven't we, in the end, a sense of national pride?

*Lenin.* Yes, we have. However, it lies in something else. The Russian people have shown that they are capable of giving mankind great examples of struggle, and not only examples of massive pogroms, hangings, torture chambers, great starvation and great servility before the power-that-be. We have a feeling of deep contempt for those representatives of the Russian intelligentsia who free the hands of the Black Hundreds against their own intelligentsia and their own people.

*Struve.* I didn't expect anything else.

*Lenin.* So is it worth it?

*Struve.* I'm thinking of those who are listening to us. Let them reflect upon it.

*Lenin.* Let them reflect upon it.

*Struve.* And reply to the main question: do you yourself believe, Ulyanov, in what you are saying? Do you believe in revolution as you plan its self-negation? You promise the

people democracy, although you well know that you will turn the dictatorship of the proletariat into a monopoly on power for one party, disbanding all others, prohibiting the press, unleashing terror, and putting anyone who thinks differently up against the wall...

*Spiridonova.* Just a moment! I have to say something! No one here can suspect me of sympathy towards the Bolsheviks, but to remain silent now would be immoral. Mr. Struve has a short memory. Lenin never thought and never spoke about the dictatorship of the proletariat as a one-party system. More than that, when he put to us in December 1917, a proposal for proportional elective representation, he said that Soviet power gave the workers the opportunity, if they were dissatisfied with their party, to elect new delegates, hand over power to another party and change the government without any revolution. You know that very well... The Bolsheviks demanded of all the parties only one thing: recognition of the main decrees of October, and rejection of armed struggle against Soviet power. And what was the reply? The whole dose of freedom offered to the parties was continually used solely for the purpose of, to use the legal phrase, seeking to overthrow the existing order. I ask you, what government would accept that? Would you have accepted it? Would we have accepted it? Never! One can only be amazed at the patience of the Bolsheviks. The October Revolution was a pure spring sullied by the Civil War. So, Mr. Struve, there is no need to present yourself as an innocent. You're an experienced man: you sat with Lenin at the same table, and were a minister under Wrangel, and now begin to talk as if you were without sin. We all bear a share of the responsibility for the fact that the opportunity to provide for a constitutional change of parties in power, as proposed by Lenin, was lost. And then, when the uprising in Kronstadt took place, and all our parties supported it, the Bolsheviks replied unequivocally — the other parties were outlawed. Yet nonetheless, in 1922, Lenin again returned to the idea of legalising the Mensheviks.

*Struve.* And you are saying that after getting a bullet in the back of the head from them?

*Spiridonova.* In the face, Mr. Struve, in the face. (*To the auditorium.*) Yes, it seemed to all of us then that, in opposing the Bolsheviks, we were thinking about the future of Russia, but it turned out that we were concerned only about immediate parochial party interests. We too destroyed

the political opposition in Russia, and created for the Bolsheviks conditions of existence both, intolerable and corruptive. Uncontrolled power would corrupt even a saint. I retract not one iota of the programme strategy of my party but its tactics I wholly condemn. When I was taking my last steps on this earth, I thought about our guilt. Yet do not judge us harshly. We sincerely believed, sincerely erred, loved Russia with all our heart, and died, despite everything, adhering to principle and believing absolutely in socialism.

*Struve.* Incredible!

*Lenin.* You will never be able to understand that, Pyotr Berngardovich.

*Struve.* Very probably. Nonetheless, here is my final argument. What will happen as a result of the revolution? You will release the lout onto the scene.

*Lenin.* So that is how you speak of your beloved people.

*Struve.* Yes, the lout. And not all your NEPs will be of any use in bridling him. What is one to do with the lout — that's the question which faces any power in Russia. Only the suicidal can contemplate democracy on Russia's soil, and all the more so socialist democracy. In order to drive the lout back into the pen, Stalin will have to pursue the path of state, imperial might. He will be building a great world power, and not the first phase of communist society. And insofar as Bolshevism will thus be discredited, people will begin to look for a way out in some great Russian national idea, for only that is capable of ousting Bolshevism. All that awaits Marxism, socialism in Russia, is death. So, is it worth it, Vladimir Ilyich?

*Lenin (ironically).* At high school I always got top marks in religious studies. I'll reply to you in the words of St. Paul, first epistle to the Corinthians: "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead."

The doorbell rings three times. *Fofanova* appears. *Struve* returns to his place.

The light changes.

*Fofanova.* It's me. They're raising the bridges. They say Kerensky gave the order! As soon as I heard, I asked to be allowed to leave, and came home. Have you had something to eat? Here's *Rabochy Put*, I bought it on the way back. It turns out that this morning the officer cadets routed the

printing shop, but our men managed to retake it, and got the paper out.

*Lenin (studying the newspaper).* And what did Nadya say?

*Fofanova (setting the table).* The Central Committee won't give permission. They're still looking for you.

*Lenin.* And what's happening in the streets? Has it begun or not?

*Fofanova.* How shall I say... Everything seems much as usual. The streets are full of people, the shops are open, queues... If it has begun, it's not very noticeable.

*Lenin (leafing through the paper).* What? What? They've taken leave of their senses! They've decided to wait for the congress! That means disaster!

*Fofanova.* What's the matter, Vladimir Ilyich?

*Lenin.* So that's why they're letting me gather dust here... Have you read what Stalin writes in the lead article? No uprising today, but wait for the congress tomorrow. Now I see it all ... colleagues ... friends... Yesterday Zinoviev and Kamenev ... today Stalin and Trotsky ... Margarita Vasilyevna, stay here. I'm going to write a letter for you to...

The light changes.

*(To Stalin and Trotsky.)* What does this mean?

*Trotsky.* Events are proceeding as planned. We have not let them raise the bridges, and we are preparing to take control of the telegraph.

*Stalin.* We decided on a policy which...

*Lenin (furiously).* That's shit and not policy! Stop feeding me fairytales! I'm asking you straight out: it is now three o'clock in the afternoon, do we have the fact of an uprising or not? Or are you again trying to carry through the tactic of waiting for the congress?

*Trotsky.* Just look how beautifully everything will be going... Just by voting...

*Lenin.* And if we don't have a majority?

*Stalin.* If ...

*Lenin.* Where are the precise answers to a thousand "if's"? You don't have them. So, we shall base our tactic on imponderable quantities, on phrases? That's not policy, that's simply gambling! Now we have the backing of most of the people, we have the chance of taking power almost bloodlessly, while you play with things one must not play



with. Both of you spend your time looking in the mirror of history — what do we look like, what fine chaps we are, we'll resolve major strategic problems with a simple tactical move. And if it goes wrong? With what is the people to be satisfied? With your exclamations and sighs and idiotic regrets?

*Trotsky.* I don't think, Vladimir Ilyich...

*Lenin.* But I do! In five months' time, in Brest, it will be games again, and not politics! It's just amazing! All of you — Zinoviev and Kamenev and Trotsky and Stalin — all are quite rightly members of the Bolshevik headquarters and each of you has a great role to play, but your qualities, when extended beyond a certain point, become the devil knows what! Not merely ruining the cause, not merely impeding it, but bringing about its destruction! Why won't you let me come to the Smolny?

*Stalin.* For your own safety.

*Lenin.* Stop pretending, Stalin! You realise only too well that my arrival at the Smolny would put an end to your games and waiting for the congress, and so you're keeping me in the wings. Safety... And doesn't it ever occur to you and Trotsky that I might just ignore your refusals to provide me with a guard and come alone ... across the whole of the city, where at every corner they're waiting to catch me and finish me off... But it's useless talking to you now, you're listening only to yourselves... (*He turns to the Bolsheviks.*) Comrades, I want to talk to the members of the Central Committee, to all those who are here now.

*Sverdlov, Kamenev, Zinoviev, Dzerzhinsky and Bukharin* rise from their places and approach *Lenin*.

Comrades, what's the matter? We need to have a talk. I demand clarification. For two months now something has been happening between me and the party Central Committee. I obeyed the Central Committee and left for Finland, sat there in hiding, sent the Central Committee my proposals and arguments. They were read and politely pushed to one side...

*Kamenev.* Oh, Vladimir Ilyich...

*Lenin.* You, Lev Borisovich, are an expert on my letters. Was it not you who suggested that my September letter, in which I raised the question of an uprising, should simply be burned?

*Kamenev.* No, it wasn't me.

*Lenin.* Very well, not without your knowledge. You didn't even bother to give them due consideration. You simply didn't reply to any of my urgings on that issue. Who edited my articles, who crossed out any references to your glaring mistakes? You, Iosif Vissarionovich?

*Stalin.* Why me?

*Lenin.* Because at the time you and Kamenev were in charge of *Pravda*. How am I supposed to understand it all? I see in all of it a subtle hint at the unwillingness of the Central Committee to discuss this question, a subtle attempt to gag me and a suggestion that I remove myself...

*Zinoviev.* Vladimir Ilyich...

*Lenin.* I demand that you talk to me man to man! You're forcing me to offer to resign which I'm doing, while retaining the right to present my point of view to the party rank-and-file and at the congress. I'm far from thinking that my opinion is infallible and must be always and everywhere accepted in advance. But kindly allow discussion rather than imposing silence, kindly argue over it and not engage in tactical moves, kindly present your arguments, your policy, and not intrigues!

*Stalin.* Why so heated? We all belong to the same party here.

*Lenin.* Seeing that the Central Committee is wavering, that the attitudes represented by Zinoviev and Kamenev may win the day, I come to Petrograd without waiting for your consent. We all meet, come immediately to a common agreement, are of one mind, we democratically discuss and adopt a resolution on an uprising. Zinoviev and Kamenev shoot me in the back. I demand that they be excluded from the party, but the Central Committee doesn't support me.

*Sverdlov.* The disagreements were soon overcome.

*Lenin.* That's true. I do not question the right of the Central Committee to take this or that decision, but at the same time no one shall deprive me of the right to doubt that decision, even though I obey it. Let's go further. Only yesterday we agreed that we would begin today. Today comes, and Trotsky begins his tactical moves. It is now three in the afternoon, and I am asking you, comrade members of the Central Committee: do we have the fact of an uprising or are we engaging only in retaliatory moves? What are we engaged in — revolution, or communist talk

about a revolution? If I haven't convinced you — then object, argue, I'm prepared for any argument, however heated, only stop saying nothing! (*They say nothing.*) You're again pushing me into acting over your heads... I am now sending a letter with Fofanova demanding that the question be resolved either this evening or tonight. As I fear fresh waverings on your part, I am appealing to all the districts and regiments to bring heavy pressure on you to act. I categorically demand that I be brought to the Smolny immediately! (*He gives the letter to Fofanova.*) Take this, Margarita Vasilyevna, and don't return without their consent to my departure.

*Fofanova.* You'll send me over there again and again, but the reply will always be the same: no, he must not leave.

*Lenin.* Impossible... (*He sits down, tired and depressed.*) Though I'm used to having my appeals and recommendations dealt with freely.

*Trotsky.* Vladimir Ilyich, you're simply feeling rather agitated.

*Lenin.* Agitated? (*It is clear he lacks the strength to launch into a fresh argument, but he forces himself.*) In December 1922, knowing that I am dying, I dictate a letter to the party congress and request that it be read at the congress. What, it would seem, could be simpler? What was done with my request?

*Trotsky.* I played no part in that.

*Lenin.* Yes, you did, a very big part! To stand by silently, your arms folded, and look on haughtily as a base manoeuvre is undertaken before your very eyes — don't you think that is taking part? How could you not have protested against such chicanery — reading my letter to delegations together with the comments of Zinoviev, which made my letter meaningless? How was your silence secured? (*To Bukharin.*) And yours? (*To Dzerzhinsky.*) Not one of you wanted to think about that selfsame crucial trifle which became the cause of the greatest tragedy of socialism, of the revolution. (*To Stalin and Trotsky.*) A simple shift, transfer, separating you, would have preserved both of you for the revolution.

*Trotsky.* Is that how you see it?

*Lenin (furiously).* And do you think that your position in the twenties didn't harm the revolution? Do you think your appeals from Mexico for the creation of an underground

party, for an uprising, for civil war, came within the framework of the October Revolution? (*He paces up and down the room in agitation.*) Then, in the twenties, we should have changed a system which allowed one man to concentrate enormous power in his hands. But, having tossed aside one of my recommendations, you pushed aside another. I warned you that the proletarian policy of our party was determined in 1922 not by the membership — we lost the best of those in the Civil War, and a lot of riffraff joined — but by the huge, undivided authority of that tiny stratum which we called the old party guard. All it would take was a small internal struggle within that stratum, and its authority, if not destroyed, would at least be so weakened that decisions would no longer depend on it. You all threw wood onto the fire of that struggle. It could have been prevented to some extent, and certainly considerably weakened, by introducing into the Central Committee a hundred workers direct from the factory ... true proletarians ... who would not take a single word on trust, would not say a single word against their conscience, would not take fright in the face of any authority if things had to be called by their real name. Thirty party functionaries and a hundred workers. That workers' contingent would not have allowed you to split.

*Stalin.* At the 12th and 13th congresses we increased the membership of the Central Committee by 17 and 15 respectively.

*Lenin.* With whom? Not one worker, not one peasant. And do you know why (*to Stalin*) you increased it, and (*to Trotsky*) you approved of it? Because you both profess one and the same authoritarian creed, for you the masses are the object of reverence, and not the subject of independent activity. I have always sought and shall always seek the solution of problems in the expansion of democracy, and you seek it in the opposite direction.

*Stalin.* Why, Vladimir Ilyich? I have not said a single word against democracy.

*Trotsky.* I have always fought for democracy.

*Lenin.* What kind of democracy is acknowledged by those who love "to tighten the screws" we already know. It's that "democracy" which sees the people as a silent herd, but in whose name one can prophesy and determine people's lives. A few workers on the Politbureau sittings — what can they understand or analyse? The old man's out of

his mind... Well, isn't that so? Yes, yes! At least they would have understood what had been introduced into the ideological struggle, what had become interwoven with it and was poisoning it. They would not have allowed you to split.

*Stalin.* That's an illusion, Vladimir Ilyich.

*Trotsky.* I agree. An illusion.

*Lenin.* This illusion as you call it, but which for me is faith in the Russian worker, in his capacities, in his common sense, is something I have lived with all my life, and I have never had any grounds for regretting it.

*Stalin.* A fierce ideological battle was being waged, and that is always, underneath it all, a battle for power. How will your workers decide what blow is required in that battle, and which is unnecessary? An illusion.

*Lenin.* Ideological struggle in the party, Comrade Stalin, differs from a brawl in that it should lead not to sweeping each other aside, but to reciprocal interaction. Should one see in every opposing view only evil intent or counter-revolutionary undertones? Should one introduce into that struggle, as you so often did, that note of malice which in politics can play only the worst possible role?

*Stalin.* When it was a question of the unity of the party, you were also not so choosy about your words. Remember the 10th Congress and your resolution on unity. In the event it was precisely that resolution which helped us to forge the strong and united ranks of our party.

*Lenin (after a pause).* In critical moments, when the internal danger is worse than that of Denikin, there can be no place for factions and opposition. I am deeply convinced of that. However, then it was a question of a specific moment and specific disagreements, not a general principle. To forbid clash of opinion and different tendencies within the party in general, to deprive the party membership and the members of the Central Committee of the right to appeal to the party in general when the question is a fundamental one, a question of principle — what kind of unity is that? Yes, unity is the strength of the party, but a blind, thoughtless unity based on the unquestioned will of the leader, on personal devotion to him, on the absence of argument and conflict of opinion — that is a dreadful weakness of the party. And what if the leader has suddenly set off down the wrong path? Then the party, subjugated by a dogmatic understanding of unity, will be unable to use its rights and fulfil its obligations, it will be silent, although it



ought to be shouting, it will sanction everything which is said and done by the leader. Is the resolution on unity an instrument of unity, or a weapon with which to silence and destroy the inconvenient? Unity based on conviction, or unity based on fear? And how far is it from that to Bonapartism concealed by some communist slogan? To genuflection and idolisation? How much socialism is there in that? There is as much socialism as there is democracy!

*Stalin.* What, are you casting doubt on the role I played in the battle of the twenties?

*Lenin.* No. Where you were leading a struggle of principle in defence of the legacy of the revolution, there we were with you. But where glaring lack of principle was concealed behind an amalgam of Marxism, it provoked shame not only among the living. Take, for example, the adulation you organised...

*Stalin.* I understand what you have in mind. I tolerated all that noise, all these hymns of praise, because I know the naive joy it gave our people. But you can't complain: your name was always loved and respected, your portraits were on display, and people bowed to you.

*Lenin.* There is no better way to destroy a politician than to turn him into an icon. By the way, about love... On taking charge of the premises, the commandant of the Moscow Kremlin, Vedenin, found a pile of books covered with a dusty cloth in some dark corridor under a staircase. It turned out that these were books from my library. On your instructions my apartment had been turned into a typing office, and my books had been thrown under the stairs.

*Stalin.* And what were we to do with them? Open up a museum?

*Lenin.* The Rumyantsev Library would have been better than under the stairs...

*Stalin.* I don't know... Perhaps I'm a rough fellow... No one complained, except... I am indeed rough with enemies of the party... I received from the people a mandate to complete the work you had begun... No one has ever had such responsibility before in the history of the world... And when I said that I was merely a faithful disciple of Comrade Lenin, it was no pretence... All I did was to develop your methods and means as applied in a new historical situation.

*Lenin.* That's not true, and you know it very well! To turn methods and means acceptable only in conditions of open civil war into universal methods of building socialism is a major crime against socialism!

*Dzerzhinsky.* How can you try to open a porcelain pocket watch using a sledgehammer and an axe?

*Lenin (to Stalin).* And if you and others like you call yourselves disciples of Lenin, Leninists, then I am no Leninist!

*Stalin (barely restraining himself).* You always told us: "Marx can no longer develop Marxism, you and I have to." Does that refer only to you, or to us ordinary mortals as well? Who was it said: "Outworn ideas must be broken and bent if that is necessary in the interests of the people"? Is that only for you, or for us as well?

*Lenin.* Was NEP in 1929 an outworn idea?

*Stalin.* You made a mistake in your prognoses and plans. NEP had ceased to work by 1928. We were without grain. I myself went to Siberia during the state grain procurement and I saw it with my own eyes: there was plenty of grain, but it was not being delivered. What kind of feelings are evoked in our comrades when, after you have spent two hours persuading them to hand over their grain, some ignorant rural yokel steps forward and says: "And you, young fella, can dance for your supper, and then perhaps I'll give you a little grain." What do you suggest we do, Comrade Lenin? Dance? Or take him by the throat to prevent the cities from starving, to feed the Red Army, to keep the smoke coming from the factory chimneys! Once, in 1918, you sent me to Tsaritsyn to get grain and save the revolution. I didn't give way before whiners and snivellers and those of little faith, and I supplied the grain for the revolution. So are we to retreat now? The peasant declared war on us. We had no other choice but to win that war.

*Dzerzhinsky.* That's not true. The peasant didn't declare war on us.

*Stalin (to Dzerzhinsky).* What's bothering you? You left this life an honest Bolshevik, so hold your peace!

*Dzerzhinsky.* I died defending NEP against attempts by Trotsky, Kamenev and Zinoviev to blow it up. And I would have done the same when you tried.

*Bukharin.* NEP was, above all, a system of civil peace, of close alliance between the worker and the peasant, a

highly complex combination of individual, group, mass, public and state initiative, and amazing diversity in intellectual life. Who is leading the country? The party, which has transformed itself from a party of civil war into a party of civil peace. Are crises possible? Yes, they are, mainly as a result of our mistakes, our inflexibility. How to overcome them? On the basis of, and in the conditions of NEP. What solution to the grain crisis did Stalin propose?

*Stalin.* I shall set out my proposals myself.

*Bukharin.* Excuse me, but they have heard and studied your version a million times, but have never heard me even once.

*Stalin.* And that's their good fortune. You didn't paralyse their will, didn't corrupt their minds, didn't quench the fire of their resolution with your liberal chatter. They still had a war to win. What a thread we pulled on in 1929, which we rightly called the year of the great breakthrough. We moved from squeezing capitalist elements out of the town and village by economic methods to expelling them by administrative and coercive methods. We did it because the flames of war were lapping at our door, because we didn't have the time to wait. We destroyed the old village, we made the peasant pay tribute and forced him to work for our industry. And the kulak we liquidated altogether, as a class, prosecuting the recalcitrant and exiling the rest. We imposed across the country a system of collective and state farms as the basis of socialism in the countryside.

*Bukharin.* That's just it — imposed. The peasant, who knew very well what the revolution had promised and given him, refused to accept it, and you had to suppress his opposition in blood. As a result, instead of civil peace as proposed by Lenin, we had police dominion according to Stalin.

*Dzerzhinsky.* The proposals made in 1926 by Zinoviev, Kamenev and Trotsky, their method of seeking ways, their formulating the question of where the resources were to come from to industrialise the country — everything also implied plundering the peasant.

*Stalin.* You, Dzerzhinsky, don't understand. New generations had been born who had not seen either the revolution or the Civil War. I offered them a future. What we are doing is your revolution, your Civil War, comrades, I told them. Dare! The great slogan "catch up and overtake",

which our heroic working class filled with a real content, didn't come from the office of Comrade Stalin. We merely formulated what the people had realised.

*Bukharin.* But Marxists are not prepared to accept any kind of progress! Socialism is not merely tonnes and metres, dams and factories, it is above all people and relations between people. If there is no socialism in these relations, if people don't matter to us, then what are we building?

*Stalin.* We were building, and we built, a mighty state, and now nothing can happen in the world without that being taken into account.

*Bukharin.* What idiots we are, why didn't we follow Stolypin? He was also building a mighty state. Was it because we wanted another kind of greatness — socialist? No one is arguing against industrialisation and the transformation of the countryside along socialist lines. That is absolutely essential. There is no other way. The whole question is — how it is to be done? That is what divided us.

*Stalin.* No wonder Trotsky called you Kolya Chatterbox. All of you leaders of the right fail to understand our Bolshevik tempo of development, have no faith in that tempo, and in general reject anything which goes beyond gradual development, beyond the framework of the natural drift of things. It's true that you're no dialectician; for you the category of time doesn't exist. We shan't wait for history to grant us favours, we'll take those favours ourselves. Otherwise we'll be crushed. (*He pauses for a moment.*) Very well, and what's your programme? What are you in favour of?

*Bukharin.* I'm in favour of a gradual development into socialism over decades via the planned growth of industry, via cooperation, via a thousand and one transitional forms of cooperation, from low forms to the highest. I'm for a change from the slogan "who will defeat whom?" to "who will cooperate with whom?" I'm for overcoming difficulties mainly by economic methods. I believe that the economy should be for people, and not people for the economy. I'm for Soviet law, and not Soviet arbitrariness moderated by a "bureau of complaints" no one can find anywhere. I'm for the diversity of cultural freedom, and not for the right to force everyone into the same mould. I'm for the political dictatorship of a party which never forgets what Lenin told it: "If you hound everyone who is

not wholly obedient, then you risk finding yourselves surrounded by disciplined fools, and you will almost certainly destroy the party"! I'm for sharply rebutting any kind of nationalism, from the crude variety practised by the Black Hundreds to the most sophisticated — also a demand made by Ilyich. In short, I'm for conscience, which, contrary to what some believe, is not abolished in politics. I'm for always remembering that just as there can be no such thing as dry water, so there cannot be inhuman socialism.

*Stalin.* And how many years do you want to achieve all that?

*Bukharin.* I don't know, twenty or thirty, but undertaken seriously and on a long-term basis.

*Stalin.* And if there's war tomorrow?

*Bukharin.* If there's a war tomorrow, then we'll fight without being divided amongst ourselves by nursing grudges. But if you don't help war with your own stupidities, perhaps there won't be one. If you don't split the working class in the West by declaring that the Social-Democrats are fascists, if you indeed build up the army instead of demoralising it by arresting all and sundry ... well, and so on.

*Stalin.* We have ten years at the most, and in that time we must leap from nothing into socialism. That's why I urged the country on.

*Bukharin.* Alright, we had only ten years. But surely it was possible to use them humanely, in a Leninist fashion? How many tragedies we could have avoided, how many people we could have saved! Did you ask the millions of men and women who achieved this leap from nothing into socialism whether they wanted to go into actual non-existence, into nameless graves slandered, humiliated, trampled underfoot, labelled "an enemy of the people"? What was your answer to their enthusiasm unprecedented in the history of mankind? The October Revolution which they accepted with such enthusiasm didn't contain this alternative within itself. What would have happened to our party if, on 25 October, we'd proposed to the delegates to the Second Congress of Soviets not Lenin's decrees on peace, bread and freedom, but the future programme of Comrade Stalin?

*Stalin.* Yet no one chose to follow you, Bukharin, even your friends from the left opposition. You should think about that. No one could put it better than Trotsky in 1928...

*Trotsky.* And I don't take back a single word! With Stalin



against Bukharin? Yes! With Bukharin against Stalin? Never!

*Bukharin.* It's not me but you, Iosif Vissarionovich, who should think about why such an enemy of yours as Trotsky was ready to march with you arm in arm. A man for whom the people and the revolution were always simply the raw material from which to build a monument to himself, and talk about Leninism without any grasp of its spirit, letter and essence merely a cover for his ambitious plans. In politics you're polar opposites, but in your contempt for people, for the masses, you're well equipped to rival each other.

*Lenin.* Nikolai Ivanovich, when my letter to the congress was read separately to the delegations, why were you also not disturbed by that "crucial trifle" I so clearly indicated to the party?

*Bukharin.* I didn't understand then. And when I did, I'd already become a pawn in someone else's game and it was too late.

*Stalin.* And the party didn't support you or Rykov or Tomsky.

*Bukharin.* It knew nothing of what was happening until the last moment. Along with you we all played at unity. We didn't appeal to the party — that was our greatest mistake. We became the victims of a backstage struggle in the apparatus, and there's no one who can rival you in that, Comrade Stalin.

*Lenin.* Nikolai Ivanovich, don't try to reduce it just to that. That would be too simple. In my letter to the congress I described Stalin as one of the most outstanding figures in our Central Committee, and I still think I was right. You cannot disregard his exceptional organisational and political abilities.

*Bukharin.* And our ability for compromise, of which we became the victim. At night I sometimes used to ask myself whether we had the right to stay silent when the fate of the country was at stake, whether it wasn't simply cowardly to say nothing. Didn't our row, the whole of our struggle against Stalin, become merely playing with ourselves? Yet we remained silent. To all my transgressions I added yet another, perhaps the most serious of all. We drove ourselves into a corner. We were frightened of disrupting that hallowed unity we ourselves had helped to create.

*Stalin.* I again don't like the nature of what is happening on stage. By the way, the Winter Palace still hasn't been taken in the play.

*Bukharin.* And what's made you nervous?

*Stalin.* I can tell the direction in which things are moving. Such questions are not resolved in plays.

*Dzerzhinsky.* But plays present them for discussion! Only all of us together can arrive at an accurate diagnosis so as to apply the right remedy. These three hours are our contribution to the work of a *concilium*, no more. Carry on, Nikolai Ivanovich.

*Bukharin.* Even so, Rykov, Tomsy and I probably underestimated something, failed to allow for something. The party didn't support us. We capitulated. The mood in favour of the methods of war communism proved the stronger. Few understood to what extent that mood went against their own fundamental interests. Of course, it's far easier to put a pistol on the table and say to an unarmed peasant: "Hand over everything you have" than to set up a flexible price system, a reasonable tax system, an effective agronomical service. By 1937 they realised, but it was already too late.

*Krupskaya.* Yes, it was already too late to do anything except intercede for this one or that...

*Lenin.* And did you try?

The light changes.

*Krupskaya.* Iosif Vissarionovich...

*Stalin.* I'm listening, Nadezhda Konstantinovna. How are you feeling? I've been told that you've been snubbed here, that you weren't allowed to speak at the city conference. Please, don't stand on ceremony but ring me straight away. We shall not tolerate such an attitude to our old guard.

*Krupskaya.* I've come to ask for your help once again.

*Stalin.* In what way? About Pospelov's article on your reminiscences? I think you would do better to get in touch directly with Comrade Pospelov.

*Krupskaya.* I haven't come about that. He attacked me in *Pravda* about what and how I should write about Ilyich, but so be it, he knows best what he's doing. Let it be on his own conscience.

*Stalin.* I recognise the sensitivity of an author. I suffer from it myself.

*Krupskaya.* Iosif Vissarionovich, Platten has been arrested. He was the one who saved Ilyich's life, if you remember, on 1 January 1918, the first assassination attempt... Shotman has

been arrested, Rakhya has been arrested, Gorbunov has been arrested... I mention only those who were very close to Ilyich, those whom we knew very well... And now Yemelyanov has also been sentenced to be shot...

*Stalin.* Nadezhda Konstantinovna, it isn't to me you should come with such questions. I don't decide in such matters.

*Krupskaya.* Just a moment, Comrade Stalin! I beg you! Yemelyanov hid Ilyich in Razliv, and I'll vouch for him as I would for myself! Take me, then! He loved Ilyich ... he saved his life! What will his children say?!

*Stalin.* Very well, Nadezhda Konstantinovna. Your word is quite sufficient for me, I'll inform those concerned... But you must also forgive me for not replying immediately to your call. Let's agree that in future, if you're concerned about something, you will definitely come and speak about it, either to me, or through the official channels — it doesn't matter. Come and speak about it.

The light changes.

*Krupskaya (to Lenin).* I wanted to speak at the party congress.

*Lenin.* And did you?

*Krupskaya.* No. I died ten days before the congress. On 26 February I celebrated my seventieth birthday, and the next day I died. Over-excitement, probably. He spared Yemelyanov's life, the death sentence was commuted to twenty-five years, we have to be grateful even for small mercies.

*Bukharin.* When, in 1929, I ridiculed Stalin's assertion that the intensification of the class struggle would become an inexorable law of our development, I still couldn't imagine where this would lead the party and the people.

*Stalin.* I wanted to spare your life... I offered you a chance, but you didn't use it... In the spring of 1936 I sent you abroad. Why did you come back? You knew very well how it would end...

*Dan.* He knew. We all knew. I talked with Bukharin in Paris and tried to persuade him not to return. Why go back to certain death? "No, I couldn't be an émigré."

*Bukharin.* Koba, you have no equal in cunning, but that particular plan of yours was very unimaginative. Your ears stuck out so that even a blind man could see them. I realise

what a pleasure I denied you when I didn't stay in Paris. My apologies.

*Stalin.* You deprived me of one, but gave me another so we won't argue over trifles. You came back. But what you'd been thinking about all that time we discovered from your lecture on Goethe. When you quoted Engels on the dilemma facing Goethe, you were in fact telling your supporters about yourself: "To live in a milieu which he could not but despise, yet nonetheless be bound to it as the only one in which he could function..." That's the quote, isn't it? I haven't mixed it up? (*He smiles.*) I think you'll agree that we're not entirely without perception. In that case one question naturally follows: what is hypocrisy, what is double-dealing?

*Bukharin.* If you simplify everything like that...

*Stalin.* Not simplify but reduce to truths which can be understood by the ordinary people I represent. And now, stand back and take a look at your own portrait: your views can only with great difficulty be termed Marxist, you never understood dialectics — that's not me, that's Lenin. I'll add to that: you sang in chorus with the kulak. A double-dealer: in 1928 you ran with open arms to Kamenev, whom you'd been grinding under your heel only the day before. Why, one wonders? In order to create a bloc against me. "An accursed mixture of the fox and the pig" — it was not Vyshinsky who thought of that, it was I who told him what to call you. Therefore was it a coincidence that our party preferred a strong-willed, practical politician to a pitiful pigmy such as yourself, a whining humanist who pushes conscience and morality under our nose to the accompaniment of kulak shotguns. Was it not you who said of yourself: "I'm the worst organiser in Russia"? As I see it, it was no accident, no mere chance that the party made the choice it did. As I see it, our party made the right choice.

*Bukharin (looks silently at Stalin and then turns away, to Lenin).* For almost six months prior to my arrest, Yezhov and Vyshinsky, on the orders of Stalin, sent to my home every day the minutes of interrogations in which I was described as an English and German spy collaborating with Trotsky, that I wanted to kill you, Vladimir Ilyich, and, of course, Stalin, and so on and so on — it's wearisome even to relate. This Machiavellian ruse was calculated exactly. I was a broken man, every night I expected to hear a ring at the door, but Iosif Vissarionovich decided to prolong his

enjoyment. I watched the October parade on Red Square from an ordinary spectators' stand. A Red Army man came up to me and said: "Comrade Stalin asked me to tell you that you should not be standing here, and requests you to go up onto the Mausoleum." Tomskey had the courage to shoot himself, but Rykov and I couldn't do it. He wanted to, but his family wouldn't let him. I realised that it was all over and wrote my will. I began it as follows: "I am leaving this life..." I asked my wife to learn it and tear it up, and then every month write it out, repeat it and tear it up again. That's how it survived to this day. At the beginning of February, Sergo found the opportunity to tell Rykov and me that he and a number of our comrades did not believe all this nonsense, that at the February plenum at which our case was to be discussed, they would speak out. Grigory Konstantinovich was our last hope.

The light changes.

*Stalin.* What's the matter, Sergo? Do you want something? You keep telephoning at night, you don't let a man get some sleep.

*Ordzhonikidze.* The NKVD has searched my apartment.

*Stalin.* Well, what about it? That's their work, they might search mine too. Nothing out of the way.

*Ordzhonikidze.* Last night they picked up all my deputies and all the heads of the central boards of the Commissariat for Heavy Industry. (*He restrains himself with difficulty.*) What is this all about?

*Stalin.* It's I who should be asking you what it's all about! I warned you at the Politbureau that your connivance with enemies of the people, your games with such damn wretches as Bukharin and Rykov, would tell its tale, would inevitably affect your moral make-up.

*Ordzhonikidze.* Let's leave morals out of it.

*Stalin.* What did you do on Klim's birthday? The Politbureau was walking down the hall to the podium, and Comrade Ordzhonikidze pushes his way between the rows in order, in front of everyone, to embrace Rykov, whose head is just waiting for the hangman's noose. And the Politbureau is left looking like a fool on the podium, waiting for Comrade Ordzhonikidze. What were you demonstrating? To whom? Me?



*Ordzhonikidze.* What do you want Bukharin and Rykov for? Not had enough blood yet?

*Stalin.* Who do you think you're talking to?

*Ordzhonikidze.* I'm talking to you, sit down! (*Stalin suddenly sits down in surprise.*) Was it of you Ilyich wrote: "rightly the favourite of the party", or was it of me he wrote "rightly the favourite of the party", or was it of him he wrote "rightly the favourite of the party"? Who was with Lenin when he died? You? Me? Who was with him? Is that why you want to put a bullet through his brains? Where's your evidence?

*Stalin.* What, haven't you read the depositions?

*Ordzhonikidze.* Give the word to Yezhov, and he'll bring depositions against you as well.

*Stalin.* I don't need evidence. Let him prove to us that he has no hostile motivations. He's always saying that something odd is going on in the security organs, that it's virtually a conspiracy against the party. (*He smiles.*) So we'll send him to the NKVD to check things out for himself.

*Ordzhonikidze.* He's sitting at home baby-sitting his newborn child, and the verdict is already as clear as day. So why convene a plenum four days from now? You want it to be our hands that tighten the noose? I saw Pyatakov before the trial. I didn't recognise him. What did you do to him? Have you given permission to torture our people because the fascists in the West torture communists? But our people aren't fascists! Who are you ranging yourself alongside? Lenin united us on the basis of consensus. Are you trying to do it on the basis of fear, by blood, on the principle that anything and everything is permitted?

*Stalin.* What's the matter with you, Sergo? Why such faint-heartedness? A bitter battle is being waged, about which you and I warned the party more than once. We are rooting out our enemies, as we also planned to do a long time ago. What is all this doubt about, my friend?

*Ordzhonikidze.* You.

*Stalin.* What — are you looking to die?

*Ordzhonikidze (calmly).* Yes.

*Stalin (sensing danger).* What's troubling you, old chap? Has that search really upset you? I'll tell Yezhov to throw those idiots in jail to rot, understand...

*Ordzhonikidze.* Why did you arrest the boys Andrei Sverdlov and Dima Osinsky?

*Stalin.* Freethinkers. They have ideas, views...

*Ordzhonikidze.* And you have a monopoly on thought? *Stalin (jokingly).* Get out of here, you scoundrell! Calls himself a friend!

*Ordzhonikidze (imperiously).* Sit where you are!

*Stalin.* Why get so agitated, my friend... Surely you and I can reach an agreement? Who is it who's been wrongly arrested?

*Ordzhonikidze.* Do I have to plead with you for the brother of your own wife? Wasn't it enough that he brought up your Yakov? <sup>12</sup> You thank him by having him thrown into prison?

*Stalin.* We'll let him out. Why all this argument and offence among ourselves? Who else do you want to speak up for?

*Ordzhonikidze.* For all those you've already set your sights on ... the party ... the army ... my own people... I can see what's going on ... you've drawn up a plan ... you won't be satisfied until you've got rid of them all... So I'm speaking up for all of them. Do you want me to go down on my knees?

*Stalin.* Sergo, my dear fellow, calm yourself... You're a naive man, you believe everyone, love everyone... In your factories everyone, including the saboteurs, overfulfil the plans. Why is that, do you think? So as to worm their way into your confidence...

*Ordzhonikidze.* So that's what it's come to. Now you've thought of a way of arresting the very best. Why do you need so many? What scoundrel put it into your head that the slave labour of convicts benefits socialism?

*Stalin.* Sergo, in comparison to the great things we're going to achieve, all of this is a mere nothing, the losses inevitable in any pioneering work... No one will even remember it, I assure you. They'll be proud of your industry, your factories that you've given to the party and the people.

*Ordzhonikidze.* It wasn't me who provided them, it was those you're putting up against the wall.

*Stalin.* You're always complaining about Molotov, saying he's harassing you, cutting back your subsidies, throwing spanners in the works, yet the day before yesterday he's put your name forward for the Order of Lenin for Magnitogorsk. I protested, Sergo's already weighed down with medals, I said, so let's name another city in his honour instead, but the comrades insisted, saying we should do both. What is Comrade Stalin to do in the face of such opposition? I had to give way.

*Ordzhonikidze (pursuing his own thoughts).* I remembered the 17th congress,<sup>13</sup> how the gunsmiths from Tula congratulated us and presented you with a marksman's rifle. You took hold of it, brought it up to your shoulder, pointed it at the auditorium and took aim. What an ovation the delegates gave you, how happy they were... It's not three years since, and how many of them have you already brought down?

*Stalin.* The victors' congress... Don't remind me of those prostitutes! They shouted their admiration, their praise, and then look how many voted against. Was that the proper way to behave, do you think, was that the behaviour of party comrades?

*Ordzhonikidze.* But your bootlicker Kaganovich fixed it so there were only three votes against, the same as with Kirov — so why be so upset?

*Stalin.* I like an open fight. I like to look the enemy in the eye.

*Ordzhonikidze.* When he's bound hand and foot.

*Stalin.* You're saying that to me?

*Ordzhonikidze.* Don't try to joke with me, Koba, we've known each other for years.

*Stalin.* You always acted behind my back, on the quiet. How often has there been talk of a change of General Secretary? Wasn't it discussed in the cave at Kislovodsk? Wasn't it discussed at Petrovsky's in 1926? Didn't Smirnov and Tolmachev discuss it? Wasn't it discussed in Moscow before the 17th Congress? And you were present at all those discussions.

*Ordzhonikidze.* Almost all. And I always stopped people raising their hand against you.

*Stalin.* I sent for Kirov, couldn't look me in the eye, afraid. Are they proposing you for General Secretary? Had enough sense to admit it. And then look how many votes against... Wasn't that his doing? Only you two in the Politbureau dared to argue over questions even a child could understand.

*Ordzhonikidze.* And you got up and slammed the door, and then waited for Kirov or Kaganovich to come to fetch you back, and condescended to return.

*Stalin.* You and Kirov were always plotting against me.

*Ordzhonikidze.* We were not plotting.

*Stalin.* You were friends, weren't you? That means you were plotting. Do you think I didn't notice how he hated me,

that Sergei of yours, how he flirted with the opposition: we say "strike" and he tries to shield them, protects them. We say that all is not well in Leningrad with the Trotskyites and Zinovievites, and he reports back "all is calm". He wanted to score points with them! What for, one wonders? Who was he setting himself against? In Paris, Bukharin told his friends that they placed all their hopes for a change of course on Kirov. So we were right ... in our criticism. The first time he refused, the next he himself would have volunteered. I hate people who play both ends to the middle! He couldn't look me in the eye... Wanted to live, didn't he?

*Ordzhonikidze.* What? What was that you said?

*Stalin.* Remember his speech at the congress? Some scribbler wrote a very effective conclusion for him and I remembered it... "To put it in simple, human terms, one so wants to live and live. Just look around and see what is happening. It's a fact!" For ten minutes after that the congress couldn't calm down, found themselves an idol...

*Ordzhonikidze.* It was you who killed him.

*Stalin.* What?

*Ordzhonikidze.* I realised some time ago that Yagoda did it to please you, but that you knew about it — I've only just realised.

*Stalin.* *Sheni deda vatire!* \* How dare you! Can you prove it?

*Ordzhonikidze.* What for? Idiot that I am, I came to have a word with you, plead you, hoped I could do something... Now everything's fallen into place. You can go.

*Stalin.* No, I'm not going to go now. Now it's become interesting. (*He sits down.*)

*Ordzhonikidze.* Aren't you afraid? You know me, after all!

*Stalin.* And you know me. I'm not afraid. So, what exactly has fallen into place, Grigory Konstantinovich?

*Ordzhonikidze.* If you kill one, you're a murderer, if you kill hundreds of thousands, you're a leader. Is it really just a matter of numbers?

*Stalin.* I'll never forget you said that, but carry on, my dear friend, please. I'm curious to see where it will take you.

*Ordzhonikidze.* What are you? A counterrevolutionary? Dreaming of the restoration of capitalism? Sheer stupidity. But what benefit is it to our worker that everything's

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\* Georgian expletive.— *Tr.*

nationalised if he's surrounded by tyranny? You corrupt everything you touch... The fate of those behind bars is horrifying. And those still at home? What have you done to the living? Where does all the information come from, the fear?... Revolutions need people whose conscience cries out, not people whose conscience has been silenced. And what do you need?

*Stalin.* You know what revolution needs? It makes me laugh just to listen to you... Are you an authority?

*Ordzhonikidze.* Why did you join the revolution? To turn yourself into a god or to give people a better life? What happened to you? When? You're not the man I once knew. Only Lenin noticed...

*Stalin (standing up).* Why do you keep pushing that in front of me — Lenin, Lenin...

*Ordzhonikidze.* Don't you dare! I'll strike you! (*Stalin, realising he will, sits down.*) Pushkin said everything of you when he wrote in *Salieri*: "I am chosen to stop him..." "Murdering the notes, I dismembered music like a corpse." <sup>14</sup> That says everything... Zina and I learned it by heart in exile... What melody in the verse... what beauty... Who could have guessed it would come in one day?

*Stalin (furiously).* That's why I prefer people who support me out of fear and not out of conviction, because your kind can change convictions like others change gloves! If you're such a convinced Marxist, if you understand everything so well, where were you before, why didn't you stand up, dissuade, stay my hand? You went along with me in everything I did, I couldn't take a step without you — and now you're afraid of the responsibility? Didn't you join with me in defeating and destroying the whole of that oppositionist scum? What's the matter, taken fright? You're pathetic! No one has the willpower or courage to see things through to the end! Weaklings! No men among you!

*Ordzhonikidze.* It's only now I realise you deliberately provoked a grain crisis and all the rest. You deliberately didn't want to get over the crisis by normal, peaceful methods... You needed another civil war... You need a conflagration ... then you can get into the saddle...

*Stalin.* Tell me straight: who put you up to it, who dared raise his hand against our friendship? Do you remember, when your Lenin proposed excluding you from the party, who it was that saved you? Or don't you know anything about gratitude? Take your chance — for the moment I'm



in a kind mood, I've given way to my feelings. Ask forgiveness...

*Ordzhonikidze (not hearing him).* Don't you fear retribution? It will come in the end, even if death saves you from it... You're afraid ... in the evening you take a lamp or a torch and look under the bed you're going to sleep in. You're afraid. I always wondered where you got that curious habit from. Fear. How could you destroy yourself like that, Koba? Now you've got nothing, no friends — only hangers-on. There isn't even a woman you love... Just one passion — power and ruthlessness. But tell me, what pleasure do you get when you hear women and children cry? And men? What do you find pleasant in it? Is the power to execute or reprieve really so sweet?

*Stalin.* Scum! I shot your elder brother Papulia, and I promise you, not one Ordzhonikidze will remain! Not one! You have my guarantee on that.

*Ordzhonikidze.* The Russians are a good-hearted people, they don't bear grudges or ill-will. But they remember the Mongol-Tatar invasion, and they'll remember you.

*Stalin.* You must now realise that you have only one way out. I grant it to you for old times sake.

*Ordzhonikidze.* I decided on that this morning. The dreadful thing is that I lack the strength to shoot you. We ourselves turned you into the symbol ... no, into the idol of the revolution, and now we're expiring yet we can't lift a hand against you... I've lost the right to forgiveness! You are right, together with you and next to you... I've lost the right to forgiveness! Cursed be the day when I believed in you and decided to follow you!

*Stalin.* And don't think you can plunge the knife in my back with your death. I'll say it was your heart.

*Ordzhonikidze.* Retribution will come just the same, it will find you, living or dead! And now, leave!

*Stalin* leaves. A sharp chord of music drowns out the sound of a gunshot. The light goes out. *Bukharin* appears in the spotlight.

*Bukharin.* I am leaving this life. I am bowing my head not before the proletariat poleaxe, which must be merciless but pure. I feel my powerlessness in the face of the satanic machine which, using no doubt medieval methods, possesses gigantic power, fabricates organised slander, acts boldly and confidently.

Dzerzhinsky is no more, the fine traditions of the Cheka,

when the revolutionary idea guided its activity, justifying ruthlessness towards the enemy and preserving the state from all forms of counterrevolution, have gone into the past. Because of that past, the Cheka had earned particular trust, special honour, prestige and respect. Now most of what is called the NKVD has become a perverted organisation of unprincipled, corrupt, prosperous officials who use the former prestige of the Cheka to satisfy the morbid suspicions of Stalin — I fear to say more — and who perpetrate their vile deeds in the hope of medals and glory, not realising, moreover, that they are simultaneously destroying themselves. History does not tolerate witnesses to evil deeds.

These “miracle-working organs” can crush into dust, transform into a traitor, a terrorist, a spy, any member of the Central Committee, any member of the party. If Stalin were to doubt himself, confirmation would follow immediately. Menacing clouds hang over the party: my innocent head alone will draw in thousands more. A Bukharin organisation must be created which in fact has never existed, either now, when seven years have passed without the slightest disagreement with the party, or then, during the years of right opposition. I knew nothing whatsoever of the secret organisations of Ryutin and Uglanov. I set forward my ideas openly, along with Rykov and Tomsky. I have been in the party since I was eighteen, and the purpose of my life has always been to fight for the interests of the working class, for the victory of socialism. Today the newspaper with the sacred name of *Pravda* is printing the vilest lies, saying that I, Nikolai Bukharin, wanted to destroy the achievements of the October Revolution and restore capitalism. Such shamelessness is unprecedented, a lie of such proportions that it could only be compared in unscrupulousness and irresponsibility before the people with saying that Nikolai Romanov had devoted all his life to the struggle against capitalism and monarchy, to the struggle to bring about a proletarian revolution.

If I was mistaken more than once regarding the methods of building socialism, may the generations to come judge me no more severely than Vladimir Ilyich. We were the first to move towards a single goal along a still untrodden path. Other days, other mores. A discussion pamphlet was published in *Pravda*, everyone debated, sought ways forward, argued, reached agreement and moved onwards together.

I appeal to you, the future generation of party leaders,

whose responsibility it will be, as part of your historical mission, to unravel the monstrous web of crimes which is constantly growing during these dreadful days, spreading like a fire and stifling the party.

I appeal to all the members of the party! In these, perhaps the last days of my life, I am confident that the filter of history will, sooner or later, remove the dirt now clinging to me. I have never been a traitor, I would defend Lenin's life at the cost of my own, I loved Kirov, and plotted nothing against Stalin. I ask the new, young and honest generation of party leaders to read my letter at a plenum of the party, acquit me, and restore my party membership.

Remember, comrades, that on that banner which you will bear victoriously to communism, there is a drop of my blood also. Nikolai Bukharin.

The lights come on. There is a long, heavy silence.

*Lenin.* I am unquestionably guilty before the workers of Russia that because of my accursed illness I did not see through to the end the question of transferring Stalin... I realised too late, and did not reform the system to make that kind of thing impossible.

*Sverdlov.* Vladimir Ilyich...

*Lenin.* There's no need to shield me! Let everyone know that I do not absolve myself from my share of the moral responsibility for what happened. (*To Stalin.*) I would like to have a word with you...

*Stalin.* I don't see the point.

*Lenin (with restraint).* Marxism, communism, the October Revolution have a specific system, a network of political and ethical coordinates, and it is the right and the duty of every thinking Bolshevik to apply those coordinates to your activity. We are all answerable before that court of history.

*Stalin.* But surely you're not denying that my convictions are communist?

*Lenin (exploding).* That I most decisively deny!

*Stalin.* I am not prepared for this conversation at the moment.

*Lenin.* You have a different system of coordinates. After all that happened, I do not even wish to waste words on whether it was good or bad — it was not ours. Perhaps it suits someone, perhaps it impresses someone... History will

show where merits end and errors begin, where errors end and crime begins. As for us, today, if we are thinking of the fate of our movement, we must say loud and clear: socialism — yes! All the socialist changes which have been achieved — yes! The methods used by Stalin — no! Morality in accord with Stalin — no!

*Martov.* Milyukov<sup>15</sup> considered him a great statesman, compared him to Peter the Great. And if one sets him alongside the Russian tsars, perhaps he was indeed a Great Ruler!

*Sverdlov.* In 1917 we began a different ranking. The October Revolution gave us a totally different measuring rod.

*Plekhanov.* For me Milyukov's opinion is questionable. Not one nation in Europe would have tolerated such a government, if only for its pre-war errors, which were astonishingly amateur and presumptuous. He talked about it himself when he drank for the health of Russian people.

*Spiridonova.* When his colleagues came to see him immediately after the German invasion, he took fright, thinking they'd come to arrest him, but in fact they'd come to ask him to address the nation.

*Dzerzhinsky.* And the nation saved him, but what was his response? The war had just finished when the conveyor-belt of arrests came into operation again.

*Plekhanov.* In the absence of Marxist culture, autocratic power over such enormous human resources as we have could only produce what it did.

*Martov.* I find this figure extremely alien and unpleasant. However, I wish to understand it. One cannot, after all, cross out a third of a century. A state has been constructed.

*Sverdlov.* "Victors are not judged" is not our principle. For us it is not a matter of indifference how and what kind of socialism is built in Russia. The ways, means and methods concern us no less than the goal, no less than success.

*Dzerzhinsky.* A state has been built, that is true. But would it not be appropriate to ask — thanks to, or despite? What potential must have been possessed by the October Revolution if such results could be achieved in such nightmarish circumstances? And if the army had not been beheaded, if the Bolshevik Chekists had not been trampled underfoot and shot, if the economy had kept its leaders and the peasants joined cooperatives voluntarily, if the nation

had been able to think freely, and conscience and morality had been given the place of honour — where might we be today?

*Martov.* I don't think such an uncompromising formulation of the question will please everyone.

*Sverdlov.* It won't please those who did not wish to hear the groans from the other side of the barbed wire, those who like "the pleasures of the whip" and see the rod as the universal method for resolving every problem. It won't please those who served the system on the principle "yes, sir, yes, sir, three bags full, sir", nor the ideological lackeys. Nor, of course, slaves who yearn to feel again the heavy hand of the master. But they are not the only ones... The problem is that millions of people who lived and worked honestly, pushing themselves to the limit, should not misunderstand us and think their life has been stripped of meaning.

*Martov.* I'm not indifferent to your problems, and so you shouldn't rush to draw conclusions. Moses led his people for forty years through the desert until those who had been born in slavery had died out.

*Dzerzhinsky.* I don't think our country has so much time at its disposal. The growing number of facts will open the eyes of those who still don't see.

*Spiridonova.* The very stones will cry out. Aren't you afraid?

*Dzerzhinsky.* No. Each new generation must recognise this handwriting.

*Martov.* Krushchev has already tried.

*Sverdlov.* Krushchev was a man born of the October Revolution. He passed through the Stalinist school, of course, but nonetheless he was a man of the revolution. He made mistakes, he was gauche, he was inconsistent, but he began the return to the truth. In the circumstances of the day, that was no mean feat, and we should not forget it.

*Stalin.* I was once given some compromising material on him, but I tossed it aside. Fool. Molotov, Kaganovich, Voroshilov — all of them feared and hated me in their heart, but they would never have begun. You show benevolence just once — and see what happens... I had too many shot? It makes me laugh to listen to you. We live in Russia, a country ruled by tsars. The Russian people will only understand us when there is one man at the helm of the country. Whatever you might say here, however you may declaim about de-



mocracy, there will still be just one in the end. What serious politician wishes to surrender the reins of his own accord? And to whom? I am not against popular power and self-government as topics for group discussion. For the moment. And in the meantime, let us show our love for our people some other way, in something they are capable of understanding and valuing. Don't be deluded over 1956, remember what followed. You cannot cross me out of the people's memory. Many will defend me in defending themselves. Until you spell out clearly what my revolution from above led to — to the flowering of socialist democracy, to the apotheosis of popular enthusiasm, to the final and irreversible victory of socialism, as I myself assert and as everyone can see who is not blind, or to millions of victims sacrificed meaninglessly, as some declare, repeating the slander of others — you shall not leave. How are you going to view the heroic years of labour by the people under my leadership — through the prison window of 1937, or from the vantage point of Magnitogorsk or the Banner of Victory? That's the question!

*Sverdlov.* That's typical of you, trying to provoke people into head-on collision. We have a different question: which heritage shall we refuse, though, of course, never forgetting it, and which shall we claim as our own. We shall take Magnitogorsk, we shall take the Banner of Victory, we shall take faith in socialism, we shall take every day which leads us out of the house of bondage — these we take, we shan't refuse them!

*Stalin.* A piece of friendly advice: if you don't want to have a mass of discontents at your back, a mass of additional unpleasantnesses, leave me in peace. The house has been built, you can live in it... If you really want to, you can re-decorate, change the wallpaper, the furnishings, and get on with today's affairs. You have plenty of those.

*Sverdlov.* If you only knew how little we want to have to talk about you! The problem is that whatever we turn to today, we find ourselves looking at you.

*Stalin.* And what do you propose?

*Dzerzhinsky.* Only one thing: that now at least the behest of Ilyich, its essence, be fulfilled fully.

*Stalin.* Meaning what?

*Dzerzhinsky.* To drain you to the last drop! That's the truth. We must throw out the bathwater but keep the baby.

*Lenin.* On the one hand, contempt for the masses, indif-

ference to their interests, and on the other, acute popular discontent with the existing state of affairs — these cannot on their own bring forth revolution. It is not enough that authority should become corrupt or lose its prestige. Both could only lead to the slow and agonising degeneration of the country if it lacks the forces capable of ending such a situation. However, the laws of life are such that the October Revolution has sown seeds which, sooner or later, will always send up shoots. The revolution cannot be rooted out of people's hearts. Even in the worst years our people kept the oil ready in their lamps, and because of that our lives, the lives of those who began the work, are not meaningless.

*Sverdlov.* Yes, but if we are to give the people of the October Revolution burning lamps, we ourselves must first light them.

*Lenin.* Precisely. (*To the Bolsheviks.*) So, comrades, either we set the mechanism of the revolution in motion, or we just remain where we are. Let's stop pulling the wool over our own eyes, let's have the courage to say straight out: either we press onwards, or else we fall back, and then the Bolsheviks will disgrace themselves permanently and cease to exist as a political party of any importance.

*Dzerzhinsky.* That's true, Vladimir Ilyich, but we very much need you with us.

*Lenin.* I await permission to come out.

*Kornilov (to the right camp).* Ditherers! Aren't you going to do anything? There's still time!

*Dan.* It was almost midnight when I made an attempt...

## THE WINTER PALACE. 11.20 in the evening

*Dan and Kerensky approach each other.*

*Dan.* As the acting Chairman of the All-Russia Executive Committee...

*Kerensky.* Never mind the formalities! Tell me plainly ... do you support the government entrusted to me in its heroic battle against left extremism?

*Dan.* We will support you only if you take decisive measures of a political nature which will take the ground from under the feet of Bolshevism.

*Kerensky.* When I asked for your support this morning,

I believed I was appealing to Russian patriots. I believed that the hand I extended to you this morning would not be rejected. It's time to undo illusions! I wish you good night!

*Dan.* Alexander Fyodorovich, wait a moment! I have come with a concrete proposal. The situation can still be saved. Decrees on peace and land must be promulgated immediately, this very moment. The whole country must be informed about them by telegraph, and notices pasted up over the city during the night. Tomorrow there will be a change in the mood of the people. With one blow you will burst the balloon of the Bolshevik uprising. Tomorrow morning every soldier and every worker will know that the Provisional Government is the protector of his cherished interests and hopes. Why should he then support the Bolsheviks?

*Kerensky.* Is that all you have to say? I have to attend a government meeting.

*Dan.* The salvation of Russia now depends on it. I beg you!

*Struve.* Alexander Fyodorovich, wait, don't answer! There is still time to save everything. Think, for pity's sake! Have you lost all reason!

*Kerensky (to the auditorium).* What should I say? Mistakes have to be admitted. I was in too much of a hurry then ... although even those decrees could not have helped us then, perhaps they would have made things a little more difficult for the Bolsheviks, but nothing more. *(To Dan.)* The Provisional Government, sir, does not require advice and instructions. Now is not the time for discussion but for action. I have dealt with Kornilov, and I shall deal with Lenin. I wish you good night!

*Dan.* Good night! *(To the auditorium, almost shouting.)* What was I to do?

*Kerensky.* And what was I to do?

*Kornilov.* Stop it! Damned intellectuals, miserable wretches, you forfeited Russia and then argued for fifty years over who should have done what... Scum!

## FOFANOVA'S APARTMENT. 11.10 in the evening

The doorbell rings three times, *Lenin* rushes to the door. *Rakhya* comes in.

*Lenin.* I thought it was Fofanova. What's happening in the Smolny?

*Rakhya.* I don't know. I spent the whole day at the factory.

*Lenin.* There's supper on the table, and then we'll go to the Smolny.

*Rakhya.* Do you have permission from the Central Committee?

*Lenin.* We shan't wait for permission from the Central Committee, we'll go ourselves.

*Rakhya (sitting down at the table).* I didn't wait for permission from the Central Committee once before, and brought you from Vyborg. Who caught it then?

*Lenin.* Both of us. How far is it to the Smolny?

*Rakhya.* About ten kilometres.

*Lenin.* Can we make it in some two hours?

*Rakhya.* Vladimir Ilyich, you know me.

*Lenin.* And you know me. You realise it's my duty to be there now.

*Rakhya.* I realise that. And do you realise what's happening out on the streets? What if I lose you?

*Lenin.* Very well. Enjoy your supper. Say that when you came, I had already left. (*He picks up his coat from the chair, puts it on, gets a Browning out of the back pocket of his trousers, checks it and puts it in his coat pocket.*) Drizzling?

*Rakhya.* A little. Say that I shouted, tried to stop you.

*Lenin.* I'll tell them.

*Rakhya.* I'll go on-ahead, and you follow behind. If I have to shoot...

*Lenin.* We'll shoot together. Just a moment... So that Margarita Vasilyevna doesn't worry... (*He quickly writes a note.*) "I've gone where you didn't want me to go." Let's be off!

The different sets disappear, and we see once again those who, three hours earlier, began this conversation with us. The last to take their places are *Lenin* and *Rakhya*.

*Dan.* When I saw him that night in the Smolny, I realised that everything was lost, that the machine of uprising would be set in motion in top gear. And so everything happened as he wanted. What can you do with someone who thinks of nothing but revolution twenty-four hours a day?

*Kerensky.* What followed, everyone knows. We can leave.

One by one, in the same order in which they came out onto the stage, the characters leave. Only *Lenin*, sunk in thought, stands in the centre, looking at the auditorium and clearly wishing to speak to us alone, to say something important,

something from the heart, and waiting till the rest have left. All have left except *Stalin*, *Lenin* waits. Time passes, but *Stalin* does not leave.

*Lenin* waits, but *Stalin* does not leave. Then, when the situation has become intolerable, *Stalin* can no longer restrain himself and breaks the silence.

*Stalin*. I would like to talk to you, explain.

*Lenin (harshly)*. We have nothing to talk about. (*To the auditorium.*) We must press onwards ... onwards ... onwards!

They continue to stand there, quite some distance apart. We would all like *Stalin* to leave... As yet, however, he is still on stage...

CURTAIN

*August 1987*



# MIKHAIL SHATROV'S STUDIES OF LENIN

## AN AFTERWORD BY DR. YURI SHARAPOV

You have read five plays by the Soviet playwright Mikhail Shatrov depicting the October Revolution of 1917 and events that followed. These works are essentially dramatic studies of the character central to them all — Lenin. In order to properly understand the plays of Mikhail Shatrov we need to comprehend the original, artistic manner in which the historical material is presented and be receptive to it, no matter how unusual or even paradoxical it may seem initially. Shatrov's studies of Lenin have many dimensions. It is not simply that each play takes as its starting point different historical events, different bits of Lenin's biography. The very character of the dramatic organisation of the material, its nuances of style and genre, change with each one.

The historian is primarily interested in the sources the writer uses. In one interview Shatrov said that he had never done any archival work for the simple reason that he had never been allowed to. However, that does not mean that Shatrov's plays are not based on credible documents. His main source has been Lenin's own works: the 55-volume *Complete Works* and forty *Lénin Miscellanies*. He has also made use of periodicals and memoirs and spoke with party members of long standing.

It must be said that even in the darkest days of Stalinism, in the 30s, 40s and early 50s, periodicals were available in libraries. The thoughtful reader could glean a great deal of valuable information from the newspapers and magazines that came out at the time of the Revolution, the Civil War and in the years beyond. Newspapers printed the proceedings of the Bolshevik Party congresses and conferences, following them up with shorthand reports. For Shatrov these materials on the era that interested him were an inexhaustible mine of facts and information.

What drew the playwright to memoirs? The fact that the men and women who wrote them, renowned Bolsheviks, described Lenin. They did not simply recall their encounters with him, but recorded his words. On the Rossia Cinema in downtown Moscow there is a poster that says, "Of all the arts the most important for us is film. Lenin". However, you would not find this famous quotation in any collection of

Lenin's works. It is absent for the simple reason that Lenin spoke those words during a conversation with the People's Commissar for Education, Anatoly Lunacharsky, and we know of them today thanks to the memoirist alone. In the late 50s, after the 20th Party Congress, Mikhail Shatrov had the good fortune to speak with many of the participants in the Revolution who were still alive, people who had been close to Lenin. Those conversations provided the playwright with so much valuable material that when reading his plays or watching a production one sometimes wonders whether the author himself wasn't present.

But there is another kind of memoir. I have before me a book entitled *The Bells of Memory*. Its author is Vsevolod Tsyurupa, the youngest son of Alexander Tsyurupa, People's Commissar for Provisions and one of Lenin's closest colleagues. The son's book is not just about his father. It also contains stories the elder Tsyurupa told about Lenin. Stories carefully preserved in the son's memory and handed down to posterity.

Naturally, the most important of all the memoirs for Shatrov is *Reminiscences of Lenin* by the revolutionary's wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya. Every line in it is worth its weight in gold. Who could have known Lenin better than the author? But, most interestingly of all, appendicised to the memoirs are Krupskaya's answers, given in 1935, to a questionnaire from the Brain Institute. The questionnaire has not survived, but happily the answers have. They present a flesh and blood portrait of Lenin — his habits, traits and interests. These few pages have been a treasure trove for the playwright.

Thus, thanks to skilled use of the riches to be found in periodicals and memoirs, and careful study of the historical materials, Shatrov has succeeded in presenting them vividly, convincingly and truthfully through the characters and scenes of his dramas.

The question is often asked, does the artist (novelist, script writer, dramatist) have the right to embellish the facts and where must the line be drawn? Judging by historical fiction both here and abroad, yes, he does. "I certainly do not question the right to fantasise or generalise, the writer's artistic freedom," explains Shatrov, one of the most outstanding practitioners of documentary drama. "I'm just against the kind of freedom where authors who know perfectly well what actually happened start creating something 'new', con-

sciously untrue, citing artistic license as a justification, brandishing the infamous phrase, 'This didn't happen, but it could have'. Yes, I'm for that phrase when you have nothing else to go on. But so little time has passed since then: today we want art to present us with a flesh and blood Lenin and the actual, real struggle he had to undertake."

Still, I would like to reiterate that Shatrov's plays should not be regarded as historical treatises or monographs. They are artistic interpretations of historical events.

Mikhail Shatrov's plays explore the means that were used to build the first socialist state in the world. A lofty end, he maintains, does not justify base means, for the end and the means are interrelated and have an effect on one another.

One of the playwright's greatest achievements is his portrayal of Lenin. Finding with each play new nuances, new shadings to add to the portrait, Shatrov presents Lenin to the reader and theatre-goers as he has never been presented before. As no one has ever attempted to present him before. "I 'look' for Lenin in the context of political struggle," Shatrov has written, "because politics was the essence of his being, that's where he revealed himself fully." However, we are presented not just with a great political figure but with a flesh and blood human being with his joys and sorrows, cares and problems. Most importantly, Lenin in Shatrov's plays comes across as our contemporary. In *Onwards... Onwards... Onwards!*, for example, this is accomplished in a highly unusual way: Lenin assesses the events of the late 20s and 30s. This is not simply a dramatic device. It flows naturally from Lenin's very being.

These five plays by Mikhail Shatrov concern various events: the August 30, 1918 attempt on Lenin's life, the contest with the left over true culture, the crucial question of the Brest Peace Treaty, Lenin's own dramatic reminiscences in connection with his final move from Gorki to Moscow on October 18, 1923, and the final days and hours before the Revolution. They are all imbued with History, which the playwright presents not as a collection of facts, but a drama of ideas, a drama of personalities, their fight for a better, shining future.

Shatrov's works are instructive in the best sense of the word. They help us understand important aspects of Soviet Russia's revolutionary history and see many of its events through the prism of modern social experience, in the context of the ideological struggle of our day.

## NOTES

### HISTORY IS A FACTUAL DRAMA

- <sup>1</sup> *Robert Sturua* (1938— ): Soviet director who is currently head director and manager of the Rustaveli Dramatic Theatre in Tbilisi, Georgia.
- <sup>2</sup> *A Short History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)*: a textbook on the history of the Communist Party published in 1938. Officially the work of an unidentified "Editorial Board", it was edited and partially written by Joseph Stalin.
- <sup>3</sup> Shatrov is referring to *The Life of Monsieur de Molière* (1933) by Mikhail Bulgakov (1891—1940), *The Death of Vazir-Mukhtar* (1928) and *Pushkin* (Pts. 1—3, 1935—1943) by Yuri Tynianov (1894—1943) and *A Discourse on Socrates* (1976) by Edvard Radzinsky (1936— ).
- <sup>4</sup> From the poem *By Memory's Rights* (1986) by Alexander Tvardovsky (1910—1971).

### BOLSHEVIKS

The play was completed in 1966 and staged the same year at the Sovremennik Theatre by director Oleg Yefremov.

- <sup>1</sup> *The Old Man*: one of Lenin's party aliases.
- <sup>2</sup> *The Czechoslovak Corps*, made up primarily of former prisoners of war, began mutiny in July 1918 in the city of Samara (today Kuibyshev).
- <sup>3</sup> *The Monumental Propaganda Plan* was proposed and formulated by Lenin. Between 1918 and early 1920 statues, busts and plaques (often executed in non-durable materials) commemorating revolutionaries and progressive cultural figures were unveiled in Moscow, Petrograd and other cities.
- <sup>4</sup> *Sofia Perovskaya* (1853—1881): a leading member of the organisation Narodnaya Volya (People's Will). She was executed by hanging in St. Petersburg for her part in the assassinations of Alexander II.
- <sup>5</sup> *Yemelian Pugachev* (1742—1775): A Don cossack who led the Peasant War of 1773—1775 in Russia.

- <sup>6</sup> The bust of the Russian revolutionary thinker and writer *Alexander Radishchev* (1749—1802) was never recovered.
- <sup>7</sup> *Alexander III* (1845—1894): acceding to the Russian throne in 1881, he championed the interests of the most conservative members of the gentry.
- <sup>8</sup> *Boris Savinkov* (1879—1925): a member of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party who worked to overthrow the Soviet government. To this end he founded the Fight for Country and Liberty Alliance.
- <sup>9</sup> *Entente*: an alliance formed by Britain, France and tsarist Russia between 1904 and 1907, which encompassed over 20 countries during the First World War when it fought the German coalition. The Entente spearheaded an attempt at military intervention at the time of the Civil War in Soviet Russia (1918—1920).
- <sup>10</sup> *Viktor Chernov* (1873—1952): one of the founders of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party and its theoretician; a member of the counter-revolutionary governments. He spent his final years in exile abroad.

## THE BREST PEACE

The play was written between 1962 and 1987

- <sup>1</sup> "*Steal Back What Was Stolen!*": the anarchist interpretation of the Marxist thesis concerning the expropriation of privately owned means of production from the expropriators.
- <sup>2</sup> *Koba*: one of Stalin's party aliases.
- <sup>3</sup> *Novaya Zhizn*: a daily newspaper published from 1917 to 1918 in Petrograd and Moscow by Internationalist Mensheviks and a number of writers, including *Maxim Gorky* (1868—1936).
- <sup>4</sup> *Alexander Kerensky* (1881—1970): a lawyer and politician who became the head of the Provisional Government (March-November 1917) on September 25. He spent his final years in exile abroad.
- <sup>5</sup> "*We'll dive in and take our chances*": a free translation of an utterance by Napoleon which Lenin was fond of repeating.
- <sup>6</sup> "*Like what Zinoviev and Kamenev did before the revolution*": Zinoviev and Kamenev, both members of the party Central Committee, announced in *Novaya Zhizn* that the Bolsheviks were planning an armed uprising.
- <sup>7</sup> At the Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party in London in 1903 a split occurred between the Bolsheviks, who sided with Lenin, and the Mensheviks during the debate on the party's platform and Charter.

## BLUE HORSES ON RED GRASS (REVOLUTIONARY ETUDE)

The play was completed in 1977 and staged two years later at the Lenin Komsomol Theatre in Moscow by director Mark Zakharov.



- <sup>1</sup> *Pyotr Wrangel* (1878—1928): the Commander-in-Chief of the so-called Russian Army during the Civil War and one of the key figures in the counter-revolution. His final years were spent in exile abroad.
- <sup>2</sup> *The Polish Front*: the line of battle in 1920 between Polish forces opposed to the Soviet government and the Red Army.
- <sup>3</sup> *Peace talks in Riga*: 1921.
- <sup>4</sup> *Requisitions or the food requisitions*: from 1919 to 1921 the peasants were obliged to sell the government all their surplus grain and other produce at a fixed price.
- <sup>5</sup> *Leonid Krasin* (1870—1926): a leading member of the party and government. From 1920 on, he combined the post of People's Commissar for Foreign Trade with those of ambassador and trade representative to Britain.
- <sup>6</sup> From *The Dream* by Russian poet Mikhail Lermontov (1814—1841).
- <sup>7</sup> *Sergei Kirov* (1886—1934): a leading member of the party and government. Kirov joined the party in 1904 and helped direct the effort to defeat the White Guards in the Caucasus.
- <sup>8</sup> A poem by S. Bobkov.
- <sup>9</sup> *Yuzef Pilsudsky* (1867—1935): the *de facto* dictator of Poland following the military coup he organised in 1926. In 1920 Pilsudsky directed military operations against Soviet Russia.
- <sup>10</sup> *The Rumyantsev Public Library*: named after the Russian statesman and diplomat Count N. P. Rumyantsev (1754—1826), it is the Lenin State Library today.
- <sup>11</sup> *Sukharevka*: the popular name for the market near the Sukharev Tower, erected in the 17th century and torn down in 1933.
- <sup>12</sup> A poem by the Soviet writer Alexander Zharov (1904—1984).
- <sup>13</sup> *Nikolashka*: the last emperor of Russia, Nicholas II (1868—1918).
- <sup>14</sup> Referring to the fact that the Russian writer Nikolai Gogol (1809—1852) burned the second volume of his novel *Dead Souls*.
- <sup>15</sup> From *Railroad* by the Russian poet Nikolai Nekrasov (1821—1877/78).
- <sup>16</sup> *Brest*: The Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty signed in March 1918 by Soviet Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey.
- <sup>17</sup> *Alexander Ulyanov* (1866—1887): Lenin's older brother, one of the organisers and leaders of the terrorist wing of Narodnaya Volya. Ulyanov took part in an attempt on the life of Alexander III on March 1, 1887. At the subsequent trial he made a political speech. He was sentenced to death and hanged.
- <sup>18</sup> A poem by S. Bobkov.

## THUS SHALL WE CONQUER!

The play was completed in 1981 and first staged three years later at the Moscow Art Theatre by director Oleg Yefremov.

<sup>1</sup> *Karl Kautsky* (1854—1938): one of the leaders and theoreticians of

the German Social-Democratic Party and the Second International. Kautsky broke with Marxism at the start of the First World War. Kautsky's apostasy from Marxism was exposed by Lenin in "The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky".

■ From the poem *Mtsyri* by Mikhail Lermontov.

<sup>3</sup> *Grigory Rasputin* (1872—1916): a favourite of both Nicholas II and Alexandra. Rasputin got involved in affairs of state and was murdered by a group of monarchists. The term Rasputinism is used to designate the extreme degeneration of the ruling elite in Russia.

<sup>4</sup> From *Poltava* by Alexander Pushkin (1799—1837).

<sup>5</sup> *The Greens* was the designation used during the Civil War for criminal, anarchist and petty-bourgeois units. As a rule they were based in the forests, hence the name. *The Whites* were members of the Russian gentry and bourgeois counter-revolutionaries, hence the White Guard and the White movement.

<sup>6</sup> *War communism*: the Soviet government's economic policy during the Civil War when country was in collapse.

<sup>7</sup> *The Ninth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks)* (March-April 1920, Moscow) made dealing with the country's economic dislocation and developing a single plan for economic recovery and growth the priority. The directives approved at the congress lay at the heart of the plan for Russia's electrification.

<sup>8</sup> In 1921 a bad drought hit the central regions of Soviet Russia, particularly the area around the Volga River, resulting in a massive famine.

■ From *A Winter Morning* by Alexander Pushkin.

<sup>10</sup> *Alexandra Kollontai* (1872—1952): party leader, diplomat and journalist. From 1920 to 1922 she belonged to the Workers' Opposition, a faction in the RCP(B) that believed the trade unions, rather than the Communist Party and Soviet government, should play the leading role, and demanded that they be given the management of the economy.

<sup>11</sup> *Georgy Chicherin* (1872—1936): a leading member of the party and government who was the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs for the Russian Federation and the USSR from 1918 to 1930.

<sup>12</sup> From the poem of the same name by Semyon Nadson (1862—1887).

<sup>13</sup> *Alexander Shlyapnikov* (1885—1937): a leading member of the party and government who belonged to the Workers' Opposition (1920—1922).

ONWARDS... ONWARDS... ONWARDS!

The play was completed in 1987.

<sup>1</sup> *The great change* is commonly dated 1929, the year the vast majority of the peasants joined collective farms. In the *Short History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* the collectivisation of Soviet agriculture in the late 20s and early 30s was termed a "revolution from above". This policy violated the Leninist principle of voluntary cooperation of individual peasant farms.

- <sup>2</sup> The term *Potyomkin villages*, now synonymous with a show or fake front, dates back to the late 18th century when Count Potyomkin ordered that "model" villages exemplifying the good life the Russian people led be built all along the route Catherine the Great was to take through the Ukraine and Crimea.
- <sup>3</sup> *Vissarion*: the Russian revolutionary democrat and literary critic Vissarion Belinsky (1811—1848).
- <sup>4</sup> *Alexander Herzen* (1812—1870): Russian revolutionary, writer and philosopher. Author of the memoirs *My Past and Thoughts* (1852—1868).
- <sup>11</sup> *Nikolai Mikhailovsky* (1842—1904): Russian sociologist, journalist and populist. An opponent of Marxism, he adhered to peasant socialism.
- <sup>6</sup> *Gleb Uspensky* (1843—1902): Russian writer.
- <sup>7</sup> *Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin* (1826—1889): Russian satirist and journalist.
- <sup>8</sup> *Vasily Klyuchevsky* (1841—1911): Russian academician and historian.
- <sup>9</sup> *Berdichev*: a town in the Zhitomir region of the Ukraine with a predominantly Jewish population.
- <sup>10</sup> *Revolutionary Military Committee*, one of the bodies responsible for planning and carrying out the armed uprising in Petrograd in 1917.
- <sup>11</sup> From *The Devils* by Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821—1881).
- <sup>12</sup> *Yakov*: Stalin's eldest son.
- <sup>13</sup> This occurred in 1934.
- <sup>14</sup> From *Mozart and Salieri* by Alexander Pushkin.
- <sup>15</sup> *Pavel Milyukov* (1859—1943): Russian politician, historian and journalist. His last years were spent in exile abroad.

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